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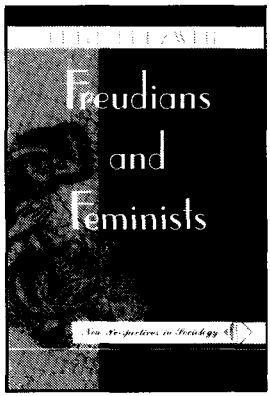
Edith Kurzweil

Freudians and Feminists



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COMMENT

Dostoevsky Joseph Frank's monumental study of Dostoevsky is distinguished by its combination of meticulous research into the life and superior literary criticism and interpretation of the work. It is a high-level example of traditional criticism, without a trace of the new-fangled academic theory.

The subtitle of the fourth volume refers to the miraculous years 1866–1871. These six years were indeed miraculous, as Dostoevsky produced in this period *Crime and Punishment, The Idiot,* and *The Devils.* Dostoevsky, in my opinion, was one of the greatest – if not the greatest – of novelists, and it is magical that he produced these masterpieces in severe poverty, plagued by his debtors, and suffering many other difficulties. Since we have no way of explaining such achievements, we ascribe them to genius.

Dostoevsky's great power and fictional authority lay in his extraordinary political prescience and his remarkable fusion of ideology and psychology. And Frank, particularly in his discussions of *The Devils* and *Crime and Punishment,* provides a full account of the ideological forces that Dostoevsky incorporated in his bearers of the revolution and merged with their personal drives.

Thus the evil consequences of his characters' ideas are identified with the corrupt impulses of their private lives. Some of Dostoevsky's nihilists were modelled on prisoners he lived with when he was jailed, and many of them are described in *The House of the Dead.* But so vivid are the portraits of lawbreakers in *Crime and Punishment* and *The Devils,* through the fictional device of creating an atmosphere of verisimilitude, as some of the central figures are seized with fevers and flights of madness when contemplating or in the midst of an illegal act, that one is tempted to speculate that Dostoevsky was projecting some of his own fantasies and feelings.

In *Crime and Punishment,* which is more purely a novel of crime than *The Devils,* Raskalnikov rationalizes the murder partly by an ideology of nihilism and partly by a belief in the historical egotism of superior individuals who are responsible for the taking of lives. In *The Devils,* the revolutionaries justify their behavior by their presumably lofty human ends. Most of Dostoevsky's radicals are nihilists rather than Marxists. But Dostoevsky was actually asserting the political identity of both these ideologies. And, of course, Dostoevsky's political and psychological insight was borne out in the justification of terror by the supposedly desirable ends of the Soviet regime.

All these tendencies are contained in what I believe to be Dostoevsky's most complex and mysterious creation in the person of Stavrogin, the Prince of Darkness. Stavrogin is an aristocratic dandy and nihilist,

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both in his politics and his private life, whose political and criminal ends stem from his unbounded ego and his cultivation of his self. But, as with some of the other people, his verging on madness after his assault on the young girl leads one to think of Dostoevsky's mad gambling drives.

To be sure, Dostoevsky was himself an ideologist. But he was primarily a novelist, and his ideology was imbedded in his fiction. He advocated religion as a bulwark against political and personal criminality. But he thought of Christianity as a form and a source of a universal code of morality, as the basis of the difference between good and evil. For example, he said repeatedly of the Godless Stavrogin, that he could not distinguish between good and evil.

Dostoevsky also was a Russian populist, believing in the basic instincts of the Russian people. But this was related to his conviction that the alien nihilist revolutionary ideas came from the West and polluted the minds of the upper class and the Russian intellectuals. In fact, many of his most effective scenes are satires of Westernized Russian liberals. (One is tempted to find parallels in contemporary radical chic.)

Dostoevsky was a great novelist of ideas. One cannot forget some of his epigrammatic formulations put in the mouths of his characters. For instance, one of them makes the penetrating statement, "If there is no God, how can I be a captain?" Another says, "If there is no God, anything is possible." And there is the remark that summarizes the evil nature of revolutionary nihilism, "You start with absolute freedom, and you arrive at absolute despotism."

I sometimes think that a great novel could be written about contemporary politics – not about daily events or ordinary politicians but about the interaction of ideological forces today and the lives of trendy intellectuals and social figures. One thinks of Saul Bellow as a novelist who might deal with this central and complex subject. Like Dostoevsky, Bellow has transformed ideas into narratives, and his fiction is notable for its added intellectual and social dimension, largely through the use of satire and irony.

Orwell On the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of George Orwell's *Animal Farm,* Harcourt Brace has announced its reissue in a new edition. The celebration of the book, which has become a little classic, reminds me of my own experience with it fifty years ago.

I was the first one in America to read the manuscript. Orwell had sent it to me to try to have it published here. I was a consultant to Dial Press, a small publishing house in New York City. I, and Philip Rahv,

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who was also a consultant, brought a number of books by new writers that were ignored by most publishers, who had not caught up with the modern scene. I recommended *Animal Farm* to the editor of Dial Press, whose name I have forgotten.

The verdict was given to me in the men's room, where we both happened to be at the same time. "Nobody," he said, "wants to read books about animals." I replied that books about horses seemed to sell.

Later, in his spacious office, as he was seated behind an enormous oak desk, I tried to explain to the editor, who had a self-assured air of importance, that *Animal Farm* was a political book. I also tried to get him to understand that it was a political satire of the totalitarian system in the Soviet Union. But he had in his mind a fixed image of the book as a story about animals.

Of course, Dial Press lost not only an important book but also a great deal of money. So did I. For, in addition to a retainer, the arrangement was that I was to receive one percent of the sales price of books we recommended. Millions of copies of *Animal Farm* have since been sold, and it has been translated into seventy-two languages. And along with it went the rights to *1984*.

Perhaps I should not be too hard on the Dial editor, since, as I recall, twenty-three publishers rejected *Animal Farm,* before it was finally put out by Harcourt Brace. Who knows how much was due to incompetence and how much to anti-anti-Communism? Perhaps a combination of both. At any rate, it was a reversal of the accepted idea of the relation of money to politics.

Several years later, when I was in London, I saw Orwell in the hospital, not long before he died. Lying in bed, and apparently not able to get up, he still was very impressive. He asked detailed questions about *Partisan Review* and about specific writers whose works he had apparently read and whose careers he had followed. He was also in high spirits and very alert for a man as sick as he was. He was amused, not bitter, about the rejections of *Animal Farm*. He plied me with endless, knowledgeable questions about the state of culture and politics in America. I was quite pessimistic at the time, and though Orwell had an optimistic personality, he too was gloomy about the state of the world.

Too bad he did not live to see how successful and influential his books would become.

W. P.

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CZESLAW MILOSZ

Notes on Joseph Brodsky

The presence of Brodsky for many among his poet-colleagues was a mainstay and as if a point of reference. Here was a man who by his *oeuvre* and by his life reminded us, against what today is so often proclaimed and written, that hierarchy exists. That hierarchy cannot be contrived by syllogisms and established in a discourse. Rather, by living and writing, we affirm it every day anew. It has something to do with the elementary division into beauty and ugliness, truth and falsity, goodness and cruelty, liberty and tyranny. But, first of all, *hierarchy* means respect for that which is elevated and unconcern, rather than scorn, for that which is base.

Brodsky's poetry can be placed in the category of the sublime, but in his personal fate, it is possible to detect a loftiness of thought, the same that Pushkin saw in Mickiewicz: "He looked at life from above."

In one of his essays Brodsky called Mandelstam a poet of culture. He himself was a poet of culture, and thanks to that he could write in harmony with the deepest current of his century in which mankind, threatened with extinction, discovered its past as an unending labyrinth. Penetrating that labyrinth, we learn that whatever survived from the past has been due to the principle of hierarchical distinction. Insane Mandelstam in a *gulag* ransacking garbage for food belongs to the reality of tyranny and baseness that was sentenced to disappear. Mandelstam, reciting his poems to a few co-prisoners, is a high moment that persists.

With his poems, Brodsky built a bridge to the poetry of his predecessors, Mandelstam, Akhmatova, and Tzvetaeva, over the span of decades during which the Russian language was turned into pulp. He was not a political poet, for he did not want to enter into polemics with an adversary undeserving of engagement. Instead, he practiced poetry as a peculiar kind of action which is not subject to short-range standards of time.

To go straight to the goal, not letting oneself be swayed by any voices calling for one's attention. That is, knowing how to recognize what is important and clinging only to it. That was precisely the strong side of the great Russian writers of the past.

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Brodsky's life and writing tended towards accomplishment, as an arrow tends towards the aim. Yet, evidently, that was an illusion, just as in the case of Pushkin or Dostoevsky. We must therefore formulate it differently – that fate tends straight to the aim, while the one who is ruled by fate knows how to read its main lines and to comprehend, be it dimly, that to which one is called.

Think only of how much Brodsky had to leave aside those trends which for many people made the every essence of the twentieth century: Marxism, Leninism, Sovietism, Nietzscheanism, Nationalism, Freudianism, Surrealism, and a dozen other "isms." He could have committed himself as a dissident, as did his friend Tomas Venclova. He could have thought about reforming the state. He could have written vanguard poems. He could have made Freudian analyses in his essays, or structuralist ones. Nothing of all that.

A life like a moral parable. A poet imprisoned and sentenced by the state, then expelled by the state, and after his death the chief of the state kneeling at his coffin. And that fairy-tale happened in a century unfavorable to fairy tales.

It would be incorrect to imagine Brodsky as a bohemian poet. When he was fourteen, he passed an entrance examination to the Naval Academy and was not admitted because of the rubric "nationality." I try to imagine him as a cadet. An officer? Lermontov?

He toiled at various jobs when in Russia, and his academic position in America was not a sinecure. He dared to be old-fashioned as a teacher and forced his students to learn by heart hundreds of lines of verse. If a student said in class something Brodsky considered too stupid, he would order the student to get out.

His mastery of English was the result of a truly titanic labor. How was it possible for a man without finishing high school, without university studies, to become an authority recognized by scholars trained in the humanities? The answer is his hard work, but not that alone. He and his colleagues in Leningrad – young poets and translators – were voracious readers, explorers of libraries and secondhand bookshops. They learned Polish in order to read forbidden Western literature in Polish translation. How many young people in the age of television dedicate so much time to self-education?

He and his friends did not want to be pro-Soviet or anti-Soviet. They wanted to be a-Soviet. Certainly he was not a political poet, yet he did

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write a few circumstantial poems – on the death of Marshal Zhukov, on the martial law in Poland, on the Berlin Wall, on the war in Afghanistan. Receiving his honorary degree at the University of Silesia, Brodsky thanked Poland for its contribution in abolishing a great evil, Communism. Learning that the Institute and Academy of Arts and Letters in New York made Yevtushenko a foreign member, he resigned from that institution as a sign of protest.

Brodsky considered Polish poetry to be the most interesting among contemporary poetry written on the European continent. In Russia he translated several poems from Polish, including a number of mine. Vice versa, the first country where his poetry was printed, when he was still in Russia, was not Russia but Poland where he was promoted by excellent translators: Witold Woroszylski, Stanislaw Baranczak, and Katarzyna Krzyzewska. His two visits in Poland attracted enthusiastic crowds.

Generosity was an essential trait of Brodsky's nature. His friends always felt richly rewarded. He was at every moment ready to help, to arrange things, and to encourage. His generosity is best visible in his conversation with Solomon Volkov on Akhmatova. He extolls her greatness, her wisdom, goodness, and magnanimity. For him the greatness of a poet was sufficient not to inquire about his or her shortcomings as a human being. As Robert Frost, to him, was a major figure in American poetry, Brodsky did not pay attention to Frost's biography. It was in harmony with his view that esthetics precedes ethics.

The deepest thing he said about Akhmatova, and probably the deepest thing said about the creative process by anyone, was his remark on her internal turmoil when she was writing "Requiem." Her pain because of the imprisonment of her son was real enough, yet in telling of it she reproached herself of falsity, precisely because of the transfer of those feelings into form. She was aware of a certain autonomy of form which uses an emotional situation for its own purpose; we may even say form becomes its parasite.

Submitting to the elemental force of the language, or to the voice of the Muse – and for Brodsky it was the same – he believed that a poet should try to please not his contemporaries or his descendants but his predecessors. Those predecessors whose names he listed were: Lomonosov, Kantemir, Baratynski, Viaziemski, Tsvetaeva, Mandelstam, Akhmatova, Pasternak, Zabolotzski. He was humble when speaking of

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Tsvetaeva and Auden. He once said he would be pleased to be called an epigone of Auden.

Without completely rejecting free verse, he paid a special tribute to metrical poets: Thomas Hardy, Robert Frost, Rilke. I have not found in his pronouncements any favorable mention of another line of English-language poetry, beginning with Walt Whitman.

As poetry was for him a dialogue across centuries, he conversed with Horace and Ovid in Russian translations. He preferred Ovid because of his rich imagery, but Horace challenged him by the great variety of his metrical stanzas.

For Brodsky, phonetics and semantics were inseparable; that is why he had no kind words for modernism, which was largely responsible for the abandonment of meter and rhyme. Reading his essays, one is inclined to think that a revolution in poetry's form coincides with a phase of civilization characterized by a sudden explosion of numbers and by mass education. For centuries poetry developed in the presence if not under the influence of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. The disappearance of Latin from school curricula roughly corresponds, in time, to the rise of so-called free verse, with grave consequences in some countries. After the last metrical French poet, Paul Valéry, poetry in France gradually faded from the book market. Brodsky's fondness for the English language probably had something to do with its more muscular nature, enabling it to create new formal rigors after the end of Victorian rhymed verse.

Joseph Brodsky

1940-1996

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WALTER LAQUEUR

Anti-Communism Abroad: A Memoir of the Congress for Cultural Freedom

I visited the Paris headquarters of the Congress for Cultural Freedom for the first time in May of 1953. They consisted of a small office of three or four rooms in Avenue Montaigne, a distinguished street not far from the Champs Elysees, better known for high couture (Chanel, Givenchy, Ungaro, Valentino, Dior, Louis Vuitton, and Cartier) than for high culture, but not literally so; Stravinsky's *Sacré du Printemps* was first performed at No. 15. The secretary general of the Congress was Michael Josselson. Born in Reval (Tallin) and educated in Berlin, he had worked in Paris as chief buyer for a major New York department store prior to enlisting in the American army. He was truly polyglot and at the same time a man of substance, not an academic but a manager in the best sense. He had good judgment and a great deal of common sense. To me, he seemed almost always on the verge of an emotional explosion. At the same time, he was a charming man and good at public relations. I was a little overawed by him in the beginning, and we became friends only much later.

By contrast, his associate and nominal boss, Nicolas Nabokov (a composer and cousin of the writer) did not impress me greatly. I remember him rushing in and out of rooms, always in a hurry. He was preoccupied with celebrities, and since I was quite unknown and unimportant, he took no interest in me. I was on my first visit to Paris; I had not published a single book; and the few articles I had written had appeared under a pen name out of consideration for my wife Naomi's family living in the Soviet Union.

The Congress had been established a few years earlier, and I had been recommended by George Lichtheim, who did not belong to the Congress and was critical of Josselson's strategy of approaching the literary intelligentsia. He had told Josselson that I was some latter-day Rastignac, a young man from the provinces: unpolished, self-made, but of a certain promise, eager to continue his education in Europe. Josselson liked to act as a talent scout. He introduced me to some of his gurus, friends, and colleagues. But I spoiled at least two such meetings. At lunch with Irving Brown, the European representative of the AFL-CIO who single-handedly did much to prevent the takeover of the European trade unions by the Communists, I accidentally spilled a plate of very hot soup over his trousers. Brown took it in good spirits, but it still caused a slight resentment. At tea with Raymond Aron, there was a famous American

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sociologist, but since my knowledge of American sociology was even scanter than now, I mixed him up with a popular American comic television actor. This amused Aron (whom I came to admire greatly in later years), but the American sociologist was outraged.

That hot summer of 1953 – we went to swim in a *piscine* in the Seine every afternoon – was quite memorable. I met some of the French thinkers and writers of whom I had heard so much in previous years. We went to coffee houses in St. Germain de Pres, the museums and the bookshops. There were interesting visitors such as Richard Loewenthal and Franz Borkenau, a young New York editor named Irving Kristol about to launch *Encounter,* Herbert Luthy, a young Swiss historian about to publish a book on France that would become famous, and many others. Paris in 1953 was a very different place from ten years later. It was more picturesque, far shabbier but intellectually much more exciting. Most people still drove around in the vintage Citroëns one knows from the old movies. In every other building there was a tiny BOF shop selling butter, eggs, and cheese. In our little hotel in the rue Jacob there was no elevator, and our room had neither shower nor toilet.

Mike Josselson offered me the job of correspondent for the Congress in Israel, which I gladly accepted. My work was neither arduous nor well paid. I remember acting as host to Edmund Wilson, who was interested at the time in only one subject, the Dead Sea Scrolls, about which I knew little and cared less (although I had been present at the small gathering in December 1947 when Professor Sukenik had announced the original discovery). I invited Wilson to tea, together with my neighbor Abba Lerner, a distinguished if somewhat eccentric economist. Wilson had quoted Lerner at considerable length in *To the Finland Station,* but that afternoon he pretended he had never heard of him. From Peter Coleman's history, *The Liberal Conspiracy,* I am reminded that I advised the Congress not to become active in the Middle East, since it was bound to remain unpropitious ground for cultural freedom. The Congress disregarded my recommendations and did sponsor certain activities there, including a cultural magazine in Lebanon. They were not successful. I was equally skeptical about Congress activities in India, not only because, as George Kennan put it at the time, in Asia the Americans were always thought to be acting from power-lusting, money-grabbing, or war-mongering motives. Indian intellectuals had their own agenda. Either they sympathized with Communism (admittedly not very deeply) and disliked America and the West, or else they were Hindu nationalists combating Muslims, Pakistan, and keeping the Untouchables in their place. Western quarrels among Marxists, non-Marxists, and anti-Marxists were of little interest to

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them. The Congress was essentially a Western enterprise, and attempts to expand its activities to Asia were bound to fail.

I tried to persuade Josselson to launch a journal in London devoted to the study of Soviet and East European culture. It was an uphill struggle. Josselson was dubious of the need for such a publication. At long last we reached a compromise, and I received permission to bring out a few hundred copies of a sixteen-page monthly documentary newsletter. George Lichtheim helped me, as did Jane Degras, the Russian expert of Chatham House, the Royal Institution of International Affairs. She was a warm-hearted, impulsive, tough lady, and perhaps the best editor I have ever known. In the 1920s she had worked for the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow, and her name was respected by everyone. We had neither an editorial office nor a secretary. The newsletter was put together in my wife's and my small Hampstead apartment. After a few months, *Soviet Culture* became *Soviet Survey*. It grew from sixteen, to thirty-two, to sixty, and more pages. After a year or so it came out bimonthly and then quarterly. Josselson had not yet accepted the publication as a permanent fixture, and more than once its future was in jeopardy. But neither was there any great desire to discontinue it, and thus *Survey* became a journal of history, sociology, and politics of some consequence. It continued to appear for almost a quarter of a century after I left it.

My association with the Congress lasted up to 1964-65, when my interests shifted to other directions. Soviet affairs had become much less exciting. I must have felt instinctively that the intellectual confrontation was over. Until 1965, my wife Naomi and I visited the Soviet Union every year; after that we did not return for twenty years. It is true that the Soviet Union was steadily gaining in military strength. But my interests were not in the strategic-military field, and while I continued to follow the great confrontation from afar, I was even more interested in other aspects of contemporary history and modern culture. My involvement with the Congress had lasted for about ten years, yet I was never a full-time employee, and while I participated at some of its conferences, I never belonged to the inner circle. My knowledge of its decision-making was only secondhand. Still, I experienced the excitement of those early years, the feeling of being involved in an enterprise in which I wholeheartedly believed and which, given the imperfections of all human endeavors, seems to me in retrospect to have been eminently worthwhile.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom undoubtedly played a part in the ideological confrontation between Communism and the West, but the scope of its impact will be known only after we have full access to the Soviet and East European archives. Thousands of studies have been written in the West about the political and military aspects of the Cold War,

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yet in the final analysis it was the contest for the hearts and minds of people that was more important than any strategic blueprints were. However, historians have paid little attention to the "liberal conspiracy" that was not really a conspiracy at all but a small organization operating with a tiny budget and a handful of administrators. It was a strange coalition of anti-totalitarians of the left, right, and center which, through a network of periodicals, meetings, and work groups tried to influence the intellectual climate of the 1950s and 1960s.

Only now, twenty years after the Congress has ceased to exist, ten years after the Communist empire has disintegrated, is it possible even to begin assessing its effectiveness. While it existed, the Congress was attacked not only by Communists but also by third-world radicals, European neutralists, and anti-Americans of every possible hue. For those who believed that the Cold War was entirely (or mainly) the fault of the West, the Congress was, of course, an abomination, a war-mongering institution, a major obstacle on the road to world peace, and a sworn enemy of the forces of progress. When the Congress was disgraced as the result of the revelations about its CIA funding, its demise seemed complete. It never recovered its initial impetus, although it continued to exist under the auspices of the Ford Foundation for more than another decade. When it was finally dissolved in January of 1979 it seemed to have been a failure. But perspectives and assessments tend to change in the light of subsequent events. As I see it, the Congress had indeed outlived its usefulness in Europe by the 1970s, but today, as one rereads its publications of the 1950s and 1960s, and if one compares them with what its critics had to say, there is no doubt about who was right in that historical confrontation.

In addition to Peter Coleman's *The Liberal Conspiracy*, there is Pierre Gremion's *Intelligence de l'Anticommunisme: Le Congres pour la liberte de la Culture a Paris 1950-1975.* Several essays on the Congress by Edward Shils have appeared in *The American Scholar* and in *Encounter.* Both Coleman's and Gremion's studies are judicious, well-informed, and reliable. They bring much that is new even to those who thought they knew all that there was to know. Those who were personally involved with the Congress may not agree with all of Coleman's and Gremion's observations, since all history is based on documents but documents seldom contain the whole story. This is true even with regard to a relatively small organization such as the Congress. Those who wrote many letters and memoranda inevitably figure more prominently than those who didn't but were of equal importance.

The Congress was founded at a conference in Berlin in July of 1950, following the Soviet takeover in Eastern Europe and a major Soviet cam-

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paign to establish pro-Communist popular fronts among Western intellectuals, including the World Peace Movement, the Wroclaw Conference of intellectuals, and similar initiatives. The moving spirit during this early stage was Melvin Lasky, subsequently editor of *Der Monat* and *Encounter.* Others who took prominent parts were Arthur Koestler, the leading German Social Democrat Carlo Schmid, Ignazio Silone, and Sidney Hook. None of them were organizers by vocation, nor had they any ambitions in this direction. By default leadership passed to Michael Josselson and his makeshift offices in Paris, retrospectively a debatable good choice of location.

From recently published CIA documents, it emerges that there was a strong body of opinion which preferred Berlin to Paris, since Paris seemed too "ethereal, evanescent and neutralist in the struggle between liberty and tyranny." (Michael Warner, "Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom 1949/50," in *Studies in Intelligence,* Summer 1995, p. 89 et seq.). Two other important facts emerge: According to received wisdom, the initiative to establish the Congress came from the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC), the covert action arm of the CIA, headed by Frank Wisner. But in fact the impetus had come from a small group of European intellectuals, and at the time the OPC was doubtful and reluctant.

Again, it has been widely held that the central figure in these initiatives was Melvin J. Lasky, then the editor of *Der Monat* and later *Encounter.* It was believed that he was an agent of American intelligence. The documents show that Lasky was anything but *persona grata* in Washington. In fact, Wisner issued an ultimatum – unless Lasky was removed from the Congress, the CIA would not support it. At the same time, Lasky came under attack by the Papal Nuntius in Germany, an American citizen whose word carried great weight among the occupation authorities in Bonn. According to the Nuntius, Lasky was a dangerous radical. Thus it was decided to terminate *Der Monat,* which was financed by the military authorities. If the journal survived nevertheless, it was owing to the support of John McCloy and some others who had known Lasky in Berlin during the postwar years. It did not become known until many years after that the KGB thought *Der Monat* of sufficient importance to infiltrate an agent. This was Eric Nohara, a seemingly inoffensive young man, the son of an official in the Japanese embassy in Berlin.To the best of my knowledge, there was no agent in *Encounter,* but it could be the scenario for a fictional thriller of quality.

A substantial number of intellectual prima donnas were attracted to the Congress; politically it was a coalition among Social Democrats, ex-Communists, liberals, conservatives, apolitical philosophers such as Karl

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Jaspers, erratic figures like Bertrand Russell who vacillated between annihilating the Soviet Union and submitting to Stalinism, people on the left such as Silone, Raymond Aron and other liberals in the classical tradition, robust anti-Communists like James Burnham and Hook – all of whom otherwise had almost nothing in common. Thus it came as no surprise that a sizeable number of members dropped out sooner or later, and that it was next to impossible, except in a very vague way, to draft platforms and resolutions. The Congress had no party line, and its publications followed more or less their own approaches: a vitriolic article by Dwight Macdonald on American culture and politics that was refused by *Encounter* later appeared in Silone's *Tempo Presente*.

These divergences concerned more than ideological issues. There were fundamental differences about the major political issues of the day. Some supported the Vietnam War, and others opposed it from the beginning. There were fierce opponents of the 1968 student revolts as well as sympathizers. What did hold the coalition together was a commitment to the defense of cultural freedom that continued to be threatened.

It is easy now to dismiss the totalitarian challenge; the very concept was denied by many in the 1970s and 1980s when the war had already been won, not owing to the efforts of the neutralists and fellow travellers. The *zeitgeist* of the 1950s and 1960s was markedly "progressive," that is to say, neutralist and even defeatist. Sartre's politics, those of *Le Monde* and *Esprit,* prevailed in France. The situation in Italy was not very different, and the British and Scandinavian intelligentsia also gravitated to "equidistance." Those unwilling to admit that they had misjudged the world situation claim today that the Congress overrated the danger, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The strength of the Congress was not in political resolutions but in the ideas it generated and discussed in its workshops and publications: economic development and planning; the idea of the post-industrial society; the "end of ideology" debate; modernism in the arts; the essence of totalitarianism; the social responsibilities of scientists. The issues discussed in these small gatherings played a crucial role in the intellectual life of postwar Europe and America. The Congress's later conferences, such as the 1968 Princeton jamboree, after it became the International Association for Cultural Freedom, continued to attract distinguished intellectuals, notables, and celebrities (including some very curious ones such as Lillian Hellman), but they lacked clear focus. The Princeton gathering's theme was America's place and image in the world, an interesting one but far removed from the original aims of the Congress and one that could as easily have been sponsored by any of a dozen well-meaning foundations.

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Of the journals sponsored by the Congress, *Der Monat* and *Encounter* were for years the most successful. *Der Monat* had the least difficulties because Germany had been cut off for twelve years from the outside world, and there was a great desire there to retrieve what had been missed. *Monat* was in the 1950s the most influential publication in Germany, and the most consistently interesting publication throughout Europe.

There was an openness and freshness about new ideas in early postwar Germany that ceased to exist in later years. When the economic miracle was achieved, large segments of the German intelligentsia turned to radical chic; the old German provincialism, self-righteousness, and *Besser Wisserei* prevailed again. If in 1950 America could do no wrong, then in 1970 many intellectuals in Germany were anti-American. This brought about the decline and demise of *Der Monat,* and it has not been succeeded by a single even modestly interesting German periodical.

Both *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente* faced resistance. The mood of the intelligentsia in France and Italy was *progressiste;* and fellow travellers dominated key positions in cultural life. The Gaullists and the right also disliked *Preuves* because of its Anglo-American connections and its lack of enthusiasm for the Algerian war, among other reasons. Silone and his associate Nicola Chiaromonte were among the very few major Italian cultural figures who had never collaborated or compromised with Fascism, but it was precisely for this reason that they were not liked by the *gli indifferenti* who had produced their films and written their books under Mussolini. Silone and Chiaromonte reminded them of their own misdeeds.

The record of many French intellectuals, including Sartre, was similar. Very few had been resisters, and they wanted to atone for their sins of omission by joining the front rank of anti-Fascism – after Fascism had ceased to exist. They persuaded themselves that Communism, purged of its specifically Russian excesses, was the wave of the future; that Stalin was an enlightened if somewhat harsh ruler; that the *Gulag* did not exist; and that the Soviet system was making enormous progress in economic and most other respects. These delusions did not fade until the late 1960s, when Solzhenitsyn's books became bestsellers and Raymond Aron, ostracized for decades, was at long last recognized as the most prescient French thinker of his age; when Sartre and his *companions de route* were put in the dustbin of history they had so often invoked when deriding their foes of earlier years. To what extent did *Preuves* contribute to this change in the French mood? It had a certain but most likely limited influence. The French were not ready for an international journal of liberal persuasion and the period was simply not propitious, although *Preuves* did receive posthumous recognition many years later. It was a major influence in

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Eastern European countries such as Poland.

In London, *Encounter* faced difficulties of a different kind. It flourished to a much greater degree and for a while, as the flagship of the Congress, had the largest circulation of any serious British magazine. Irving Kristol was in many respects an ideal editor, yet with all his Anglophilia, he did not quite succeed in overcoming the antagonism of the British literary intelligentsia, which resented America and foreign influences in general. Many sympathized with *The New Statesman* (still going strong in the 1950s); others pretended to be eccentrics. The atmosphere of superciliousness and negativism, of snobbism and arrogance was not promising for a journal like *Encounter.* It tried to accommodate itself to this mood: its most famous article in the early years was Nancy Mitford's "British Aristocracy," on "U" and "non-U," and while Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene did not, of course, become contributors, Malcolm Muggeridge was one of the stalwarts. Whatever the stature of some of the British literary elite in the history of literature, to a movement devoted to the cause of cultural freedom they were useless. Kristol mixed with the wrong crowd – but there was no other crowd, at least not among the literati.

This was not, of course, the whole story, and if the Labour Party has distanced itself in recent years from public ownership, much of the groundwork was done by *Encounter* during the fifties and sixties. There were some immensely gifted writers among the British academics, but there was no real support for a cosmopolitan journal. Intellectual fashion preferred *The Private Eye* and occasionally *The Spectator.* For serious magazines such as those that had existed in earlier generations, there was no longer much demand. *Encounter* provided more entertainment than substance to an audience that had no appetite for substance. It published interesting and widely-read articles, but, as in the case of *Preuves,* its influence and reputation were greater outside of the country in which it was published. And, as in the case of *Der Monat, Encounter* did not find a successor. Since its demise there has been no serious political and literary journal in Britain.

I did not regularly read the other Congress magazines, but *Quadrant* in Australia was among the more successful. *Forum*, published in Vienna, was pretty much the work of one writer, Friedrich Torberg, whose involvement with the Congress has recently been related in a critical, unfriendly biography by Frank Tichey. The splenetic Torberg, one of the greatest satirists in the German language, was largely devoted to his private feuds with other writers. At the age of twenty, he had published an outstanding novel about the suicide of a high-school student, *Der Schueler Gerber hat absolviert,* followed five years later by *Die Mannschaft,* one of the best German novels with competitive sports as a background. In later

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years he was more successful as the author of short satirical sketches – the great novel he hoped to produce was never written. I owe him a large personal debt of gratitude, for it was he who introduced me to Dehmel, the famous Viennese *konditorei,* and other local spots. But he was a quarrelsome man; one of his few lasting friendships was with Marlene Dietrich. She called him from Paris whenever she felt lonely and sad, which was quite often.

Torberg, like Silone, paid not the slightest attention to what the Congress Secretariat in Paris thought or wanted or objected to; both were quite independent. For an organization such as the Congress, Torberg became an embarrassment, and it eventually parted ways with him. I knew Silone less well than Torberg, and on the few occasions we met, the Italian writer was for one reason or another ill-humored and taciturn. For a long time, Silone was overshadowed in Italy by more fashionable intellectual figures. But towards the end of his life, and since then, he has been the subject of several appreciative biographies.

I was most familiar with the affairs of *Soviet Survey* in the early years. We were constantly in battle with Paris over obtaining greater allocations in order to publish a more substantial magazine; there was so much interesting material and so few pages at our disposal. By the late fifties and early sixties, some of the best issues of *Survey* had come out – on Marxist revisionism, on the state of Soviet studies, on China, on personal recollections of the early "heroic" period of Soviet history. George Lichtheim, at work on his books on socialism, had dropped out. I too wanted to have more time for my own work.

One day, Jane Degras mentioned Leopold Labedz who, like Faust, had studied almost every subject under the sun. Born in Simbirsk (like Lenin and Kerensky) of Polish parents, he was thirty-five years old at the time. I talked to him for many hours and asked him to contribute an article about Soviet sociology to *Survey*. Eventually I asked him to join *Survey* as an associate editor. Leo was a man of amazing breadth and depth of knowledge, at home in the social sciences as much as in the humanities, a thinker of greater stature than more famous men I came to know. His critical faculties were admittedly more developed than his creative ones; he never wrote a book, and he lacked the patience of a teacher. The best essay he ever wrote was a devastating piece on Isaac Deutscher, the Polish-Jewish writer who had settled in Britain. A former Communist, Deutscher had for years enjoyed phenomenal success as a commentator in Europe on Soviet affairs. (To this day, his biography of Stalin is still treated as a classic in some quarters.) Deutscher was not an uncritical admirer of Stalin, but an admirer he was, and his seemingly "objective" approach, very much in contrast to the official Communist

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absurdities, disguised the Soviet Union and its leaders as a democratic, progressive, humanitarian force. According to Deutscher, if there had been deviations from the erstwhile ideals, a breathtaking Leninist revival was just around the corner and would restore the pristine values of the Russian Revolution. Deutscher wrote exceedingly well and would have been even more successful as a novelist than an historian. In fact, he began his career as a literary figure. Against this very talented purveyor of snake oil, Labedz went to field. His essay was so negative that Deutscher threatened him with a lawsuit.

During those years, I found Leo immensely stimulating. We talked on the phone almost every evening about editorial matters, world affairs, books we had read. Leo read so much that there was no time left for him to write anything of much consequence, except some brilliant polemics. He found it physically impossible to discard manuscripts, newspapers, books, journals – as a result his little house in East Finchley became a storage place in which there was hardly room for a bed and a table. At *Survey,* Leo's habits drove Jane Degras to distraction. His own articles were never delivered on time, and he was not willing to pass on contributions by other authors. Trivial considerations such as printers' deadlines did not exist for him. Things went from bad to worse, and reluctantly I asked Paris to dismiss him. But Leo promised to mend his ways and did to a slight degree, so I was overruled. Under the circumstances I suggested that he should be made coeditor, thus sharing the responsibility for the appearance, more or less on time, of *Survey.*

After I left, *Survey* continued to grow in size and to a certain extent changed its character. Leo obtained and was first to publish in English some of the key texts of the Russian and East European dissidents. His merits in this respect were enormous and have not been fully recognized. He also persuaded himself that he had been the founder of *Survey,* that until he had arrived on the scene it was a mere newsletter, which he had transformed into a major magazine. Later, his version of events found their way into several books. I was amused rather than annoyed, because Leo had been in the forefront of those preaching the gospel of truthfulness to Communist historians. He had not always practiced what he preached. I was not angry, because I had moved on to other fields, whereas *Survey* was the center of Leo's life; the cause of endless, heated debates, of sleepless nights and of friendships broken off. It could well be that but for such a single-minded and discipline-lacking editor, the magazine would not have lasted as long as it did and not have made such a noble contribution. What did it matter *sub species aeternitatis* that the magazine appeared once or twice a year rather than four times, often with a year's delay?

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For a long time after 1965, I rarely saw Leo, but whenever I was in London we had dinner. He did not mellow with age but became more rigid, and this affected his judgment. Our political discussions became difficult, but we still had many common interests such as literature and French films of the thirties and forties. Leo became a hawk about Israel in the 1970s, without ever having been interested in Jewish affairs. He died in 1993 after a long and painful illness which he bore with great fortitude. Leo never became well known outside of a small circle of *cognoscenti*. Yet in his native Poland he was a legendary figure. Shortly before his death, he revisited Warsaw for the first time in fifty years and was given a hero's welcome. The last issues of *Survey* were guest-edited by friends of Leo. At the very time when the Soviet empire collapsed and almost everyone in Moscow made it known that what the contributors to *Survey* had been saying for decades had been correct, the publication ceased to appear.

For a long time, there had been rumors that the Congress for Cultural Freedom was financed by the CIA or, to be precise, received a considerable part of its budget from grants channeled by the CIA through various American foundations to Josselson in Paris. It is my impression that no more than three or four people knew the exact nature of the relationship between the CIA and the Congress. Like the rest, I did not know, nor did I try very hard to find out. What is more, the amount of financial support was very modest, and the publications' editors' salaries were anything but princely. In fact, throughout its history, the Congress had great difficulty finding and keeping first-rate editors at the salaries it could pay. Peter Coleman's book states that the annual allocation for *Survey* in 1966 was $45,000. I would imagine that in the earlier years when I was editor, it received little more than half that sum, but I did not pay much attention to the financial aspects of *Survey*'s operation.

At the height of the Cold War, gaining necessary financial support seemed more important than the nature of its source. Similar allocations were made by governments in every major (and many minor) countries, but these nations were less open than the United States and affairs were handled more discreetly. The sources of the Congress funds did not impinge on the editorial freedom of its publications. For example, Mike Josselson and a number of other leading figures opposed the Vietnam War from the beginning. When the Congress played a significant role in the destabilization of the Franco regime in Spain, it put out a journal called *Censorship,* which denounced political and cultural censorship worldwide.

From 1965 to 1967, with the shift of public opinion in America, revelations about the CIA were made in various publications such as *The New York Times, The Nation, Ramparts,* and *The New York Review of Books*. The revelations caused much commotion, especially in Britain and

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among some sponsors elsewhere who felt that their trust had been betrayed. *The Saturday Evening Post* published a piece by Thomas Braden, the senior CIA official responsible for the channeling of CIA funds. He stated that he was far from ashamed of having contributed to the appearance of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Paris, the founding of *Encounter,* and other such ventures, declaring, "I am glad the CIA is immoral." (Among the many other recipients of CIA funds were various student organizations, the American Friends of the Middle East, the American Society for African Culture, the African-American Institute, the Synod of Russian Bishops Abroad, and the International Commission of Jurists.) By that time I was no longer associated with the Congress in any way, but the defensive tenor seemed to me as idiotic as the accusations were hypocritical; what was immoral about *Encounter* or the Boston Symphony Orchestra?

In a private letter to Shepard Stone (the President and Chief Executive of the Congress at the time), George Kennan put it very well:

> The Congress is an institution of great value which should have a permanent place, it seems to me, in the life of our Western world. The flap about the CIA money was quite unwarranted and caused far more anguish than it should have been permitted to cause. I never felt the slightest pangs of conscience about it. . . . This country has no ministry of culture and the CIA was obliged to do what it could to try to fill the gap. It should be praised for having done so, and not criticized. It is unfair that it should be so bitterly condemned for its failures and then should get upbraided for when it does something constructive and sensible. And the Congress would itself have been remiss if it had failed to take money which came to it from good intent and wholly without strings or conditions.

There is a stronger argument to be made: what had been permissible and indeed inevitable in the 1950s, in view of the immediacy of the danger and the urgency of the needs, was no longer feasible ten years later. While it is true that greater efforts might have and should have been made to obtain funding from other sources, it is unlikely, given the American system, that the U. S. Congress would have allocated funds to foreign operations over which it had no control. Those on the far left would have opposed it because of the anti-Communist orientation of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Others would have been reluctant to finance liberals and social democrats with whose ideas they had no sympathy. Above all, there was a general aversion to spending on cultural diplomacy, an attitude that persists today. Public diplomacy was always

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the stepchild of American policy makers, deemed at best a luxury which America could ill afford. Could the large foundations have stepped in? Attempts to court them in the late 1950s were unsuccessful. Furthermore, it is likely that under the tutelage of private foundations, the Congress's seminars and publications would have had less freedom than under the CIA. Such are the ironies of history. That there was such freedom seems difficult for many to accept. A recent essay by Margery Sabin, "The Politics of Cultural Freedom: India in the 1950s" (*Raritan*, Spring 1995), contends that "intellectuals from America such as Hannah Arendt, Edward Shils, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Daniel Bell, John Galbraith and others, took for granted the benign character of whoever they thought was subsidizing their travel to Milan and did not welcome having their discussions of principles disrupted by low-minded charges that Western freedom concretely meant submitting to American power for dollars."

With the CIA revelations, the campaign of attacks that had plagued the Congress from its beginnings reached a crescendo. In a *Nation* article, "Literary Bay of Pigs," Alexander Werth derided the journals that had "done their best to keep the Cold War going." Conor Cruise O'Brien, Jason Epstein, Christopher Lasch, and countless lesser lights denounced the deep moral corruption of the anti-Communist liberal intellectuals, especially the ex-Communists among them. The issue was no longer what the subsidies had been used for, let alone who had been right in the ideological debate; by secretly accepting government money, the Congress had automatically disqualified itself. It was no longer necessary to discuss seriously the political issues involved, because any cause supported by the American government was *a priori* reprehensible. As Alexander Werth put it, "that there was something fishy about *Encounter* should have been clear to any person of minimum intelligence." Others were equally scathing. Theodore Draper was denounced because he had dared to suggest that Castro was not a democrat but belonged to the Soviet orbit. As for the lack of cultural (and other) freedom in the Soviet empire, all kinds of mitigating circumstances were advanced. The anti-anti-Communists had regained the high moral ground.

I missed most of these articles when they first appeared, and reading them today, they are strange and embarrassing. How sure the authors were of their cause, how triumphant, how mordant, and how mistaken from a perspective of thirty years later. In each period of history, there are tests according to which individuals and groups are judged. Anti-fascism was one, anti-Stalinism another. There was, of course, much more to the Congress for Cultural Freedom than Communism and anti-Communism, but this was the issue which annoyed its critics the most. It seems not to have occurred to them that one day the Soviet archives would be opened

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and that the findings would undermine most of their cherished assumptions about the Cold War, the aims and character of Soviet policy. Soviet documents would not just confirm most of what the Congress publications had asserted in their time but would go well beyond that. In fact, many opponents of the Congress, such as Conor Cruise O'Brien and Christopher Lasch, later changed their views. *The New York Review of Books* has not published diagrams of Molotov cocktails for many years. Persistent allegations arose that Alexander Werth had been a Soviet agent of influence; he made damaging confessions and eventually committed suicide. Seldom in history has an organization been vindicated by subsequent events as fully as the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

One could conclude the story here, but there are still a number of loose ends. Mistakes were committed by the Congress, but they were not those most frequently adduced in later years. The Congress was established hastily, and the choice of some officials was far from ideal. There was a heavy concentration on well-known names and great reputations, some of them bogus. Some of the conferences were mainly for show, and the attendees sometimes reminded one of the smart set commuting between St. Tropez in summer and St. Moritz or Gstaad in winter. There was snobbism, particularly in Britain; the outward appearance of refinement, wit and sophistication combined with a lack of substance; college high-table talk and Café Royal gossip. A figure like Labedz was kept at a distance. He was too uncouth, his English too heavily accented to fit into the company of polished but inconsequential tea and cocktail parties. Such flippancy and lack of seriousness was very much in contrast to the traditional European-Russian image of intellectuals and the intelligentsia. Yet there were mitigating circumstances: an organization aiming for political impact could not rely solely on young but unknown geniuses; it needed big names. There was a tendency to overdo this, and the efforts to attract certain literary figures were out of proportion, except in the case of a Camus or a Malraux, but in the overall balance such flaws were not dominant. I have never enountered such a concentration of gifted, stimulating, and interesting individuals as there were in the workshops of the Congress during its best years.

The Congress was right in its basic political choices, opting for the cause of freedom or at least relative freedom. But how influential was it really in affecting the politics of the intelligentsia, and politics in general, in Europe and elsewhere? It is hard to assess the impact of ideas on politics, and subsequent developments have not been unequivocal. If in the late fifties many French intellectuals were turning away from Leninism, as did the Italians in later years, in the following decades the Germans discovered Marxism and transformed it into a new nationalism.

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Solzhenitsyn's writings had a tremendous impact in France but little in Germany. It is impossible to measure ideological influences, but the impact of the Congress was considerably greater in Russia and Eastern Europe than in the West. For example, the Paris-based Polish-language journal *Kultura* (very close to the Congress ideologically but not a part of its network) made a substantial contribution to the downfall of Communism in Poland, a matter of great consequence, since the Polish example influenced the rest of the Soviet bloc. A considerable amount of material published by the Congress was translated into Russian in a few hundred copies but was widely circulated. More was accessible in the so-called *Spetskhrany,* the collections of ideologically harmful material available only to trusted researchers. By the 1970s all but the most hardened *apparatchiki* and the most simple-minded enthusiasts had ceased to believe in Marxism-Leninism, due not in small part to the ideological spadework done by the Congress in earlier decades.

The full measure of the work of the Congress remains to be studied, and conclusive answers may remain forever out of reach. Those who opposed the aims and activities of the Congress at the time, and their ideological descendants, claim that its work was unnecessary because a real threat never existed or was grossly exaggerated. According to the same argument, there was no need to spend much on military defense since the Soviet system was so weak. But this is to confuse cause and effect. The Soviet system was not always weak, and Soviet propaganda, even among intellectuals, was not always ineffective. And when the regime collapsed, it was not owing to the efforts of those who wanted to appease it and make major concessions.

All this now belongs to history, and yet it has a bearing on the present. The Congress was a coalition of disparate individuals and groups. Its pluralism was genuine, as were its inconsistencies and disorder. There has been a tendency in the media as well as in academic publications during the last two decades to describe the critics of Soviet and Communist politics as "neoconservatives." In America, "liberal" became a synonym for "anti-anti-Communism." This, in historical perspective, may be flattering from a conservative point of view but it is untrue. The Congress for Cultural Freedom was not the breeding ground of neoconservatism. Many conservatives were or became isolationsts, even though few were willing to accept this label, whereas the AFL-CIO was in the forefront of the battles of the Cold War. John Ehrman, in his book *The Rise of Neoconservatism,* rightly notes that contrary to what the label implies, some cold warriors were liberal on social issues and favored governmental interference in economic affairs; others were social and cultural conservatives reluctant to interfere with markets. Nevertheless, Ehrman

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persists in applying the useless and misleading labels. For while the term "neoconservatism" may be applicable in the context of domestic politics, what does it indicate in world affairs? (Nor does the epithet apply to Raymond Aron and Daniel Bell, the two people most central to setting the agenda of the Congress's conferences and seminars.) Were Brezhnev and Andropov liberals or conservatives? Were the Chinese more progressive or more reactionary than the Soviet leaders? Was Solidarity a conservative or a liberal movement? Did one have to be a neoconservative to oppose Honecker? If the critics of the Soviet system were neoconservatives, then the Soviet leaders, according to this line of reasoning, must have been radicals or at least liberals. In truth, if anything, they were conservatives.

To ask these questions is to demonstrate the absurdity of the labels. Yet they are used and probably will be used in the future, often out of laziness, ignorance, and want of another label, but sometimes simply to obfuscate matters. This was true forty years ago, and it is especially true today. The fact that the Congress was right when many others were wrong did not add it its popularity. As they used to say in Paris at the time, it was better to be wrong with Sartre than to be right with Raymond Aron. To this day, many have not forgiven the Congress, just as Fascist fellow travellers could not forgive Ignazio Silone.

In the summer of 1991, a few dozen cold warriors who had been involved in the activities of the Congress gathered in East Berlin. As is the custom on such occasions, there were a great many speeches. It was striking to see to what extent old colleagues had moved in different directions. Some had become fully-fledged conservatives stressing the importance of religion and other traditional values, while others felt more in tune with the heritage of the Enlightenment. Some were vaguely in sympathy with social democracy, yet others had moved towards some form of neo-isolationism or had lost interest in foreign affairs altogether. We were all aware that we were now divided in many ways, but we had a past in common. The leading historian of the Cold War, John Gaddis, wrote afterwards that "many of us had become too sophisticated to see that the Cold War was about the imposition of autocracy and the demise of freedom." The Congress for Cultural Freedom had not committed this mistake.

The story of the Congress will be told again in greater detail and with different emphasis. It was a fascinating historical episode and offers a variety of lessons which will almost certainly be ignored. Simply put, its initiative was possible and the money allocated only because it was done behind the back of the United States Congress. A coalition of Democratic and Republican populists and isolationists have always opposed cultural

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diplomacy, root and branch. In recent years, the attacks against the National Endowment for Democracy, the virtual liquidation of the Munich radio stations, and the budget cuts leading to the cessation of many USIA activities have shown this again. America spends less on the support of arts on a per capita basis than any other developed country. It could be argued that it would be unreasonable to allocate for cultural purposes abroad funds which are denied to cultural institutions at home. Cultural policy, unlike military defense, has no domestic constituency. The villain is not, however, the American people. Public opinion polls have shown that there is a willingness to give for purposes of this kind. But influential legislators know better: culture is elitist, and the diffusion of culture abroad is a luxury as well as reprehensible because it constitutes interference in the affairs of other countries. Alone among all the developed countries, America has no ministry of culture or arts or national heritage, and the contributions made by the private sector have been small, sporadic, and declining in recent years. But this is another story. As for the Congress for Cultural Freedom, we shall not see the like of it again, except perhaps in another state of emergency.

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GERALD HOLTON

Science Education and the Sense of Self

If historians of the future look back on the history of the United States, they will find two curious paradoxes. On the one hand, many of the contributions to science and engineering in the United States in the twentieth century will be counted among the major intellectual achievements. In addition, this better understanding of how the world works has led to remarkable increases in industrial productivity in the human life span, in agricultural yields, and so forth. Science and engineering will also be seen as having played a major role in the Allies' victory in World War II.

Of course, more needs to be done, and all too often the human race has either failed to avail itself of useful knowledge or, ever since the invention of fire, has found ways to abuse it. I know of no intellectual who would dispute this, or who adheres to the flagrant scientism that now exists mostly in fiction and in the rhetoric of critics. But precisely within the awareness of their limits, the sciences have achieved the moral authority to be considered among the central components of the twentieth-century worldview, on a par with the other major motivating cultural forces, such as the arts, and what William Faulkner called the universal truths, those of "love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice."

From this perspective, given the essential place of the scientific view, our hypothetical future scholars might reasonably expect that science education in the schools and colleges of our day will have been of the same high quality as the sciences themselves, and that the relation between science and society was rendered in a sound and balanced way by the usual purveyors of such information, our scholarly societies, academies, museums, and so forth. But it is just at this point that those future historians will be startled to discover how wrong these reasonable expectations are. That is the first paradox. I need not spell out the details. We are all heartsick about the data, such as the fact that all but the most elementary rudiments of science, mathematics, and engineering have been squeezed out of the curriculum for the majority of college students. In some of our

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most prestigious colleges a total of only two out of thirty-two one-semester courses are required in science and math – about six percent of the educational experience. And those courses usually have to build on the extremely tenuous foundation, if any, previously laid in high school. And into this void flow negative and bizarre views of science and technology, from courses these students take outside science and from the general culture.

This failure is traceable in large part to negligent acquiescence by scholars, intellectuals, teachers, administrators, and above all, by the scientists themselves. That in turn would not have even been thinkable if it were not for a profound displacement which has occurred in the position of science in our culture, at this so-called "end of the modern era." On this point, I agree with the thoughtful analysis by Sir Isaiah Berlin, in his book entitled *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. He documents that many of the fundamental notions, which the worldview of the West developed since the Enlightenment, are being challenged in our time, as in various periods in the past, by the rise of a worldwide movement that has the technical name "the Romantic Rebellion." As he says, no one predicted that the current form of this rebellion would be what dominates "the last third of the twentieth century." The timidity and ineffectiveness, at least until very recently, of most scientists and their scientific organizations in responding to what amounts to attacks on their very legitimacy, are easy to document. I think it is wrong to focus only on the attacks themselves. They are part of an evolutionary mechanism by which cultures are formed. But the feebleness of the attempts to understand the attacks, and to oppose them – that constitutes the second paradox.

There are numerous illustrations of the challenge to the legitimacy of science that has been appearing within the science education movement itself – that is, not in books by individual gurus or on the crazy corner of the Internet, but right in the publications and activities of teams of intelligent, well-educated and, on the whole, well-intentioned persons charged with the business of education. It is exactly such products that are most revealing of the role science is thought to play in American cultural life today.

The first document is a draft of the *National Science Education Standards* for Grades K-12. This project started with excellent intentions and under the best possible patronage. The National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences was commissioned to draft such standards in 1991 by a group including the U. S. Secretary of Education, the National Science Teachers Association, the National Science Foundation – all this in the wake of the 1989 declaration of the nation's fifty governors, who

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announced that internationally competitive national standards of excellence for the schools of America were important national goals. As is usual in such projects, a complex set of advisory committees and other outreaches was arranged to assure that the standards would not only improve the study of science in schools, but also would represent the consensus of teachers and other science educators, scientists, and the general public. The list of members of advisory committees, national committees, working groups, and professional organizations involved during the first two years takes eight pages, as given in the first draft, released in November 1992. It includes the names of some of our best scientists.

But as these things are done, they did not write the report, and the result surprised some of them. For example, the version of the report released in November 1992 to selected commentators announced at the outset that the intellectual foundations of school science education and the national science education standards would not be merely the science disciplines, but also the philosophy, history, and sociology of science. In my own role as science educator, I have always tried to infuse science teaching with just such elements, so I was delighted to read this. But at that point in the document there was a footnote directing the reader to an appendix which would set forth the "contemporary views of the philosophy of science." That appendix – written, according to one staff member, by two philosophers who had been hired for the purpose – is a confused farrago that includes the following flat statements: "Two competing paradigms of science have been the focus of disagreement among historians, philosophers, and sociologists. The older, referred to as logical positivism, is characterized by arguments for the objectivity of scientific observation and the truth of scientific knowledge." Parenthetically, I should insert that at that point I seemed to hear howls of laughter from the graves of the logical positivists at this confused summary of their intentions.

To continue to the next sentence in the draft: "A more contemporary approach, often called postmodernism, questions the objectivity of observation and the truth of scientific knowledge." And after the admonition that science is "the mental representation constructed by the individual," this section on philosophy closed with the flat statement: "The National Science Education Standards are based on the postmodernist view of the nature of science." The constructivist point of view had found its way into the educational standards being prepared under such high auspices. Of course, when they read it, this 1992 draft caused some consternation among members of the national committee, at least two of whom, I am told, resigned. So the groups involved in the writing were sent back to the drawing board, and eighteen months later, in May 1994,

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there was released for comment a second draft of the National Science Education Standards, from the same agency.

I received a copy and read it with care, because the adoption of national standards could have the biggest effect on the nation's pre-college education since the founding of public schools. And in fact, the May 1994 document had some promising features – for example, in the defense of evolution in biology and in the pedagogic use of the history of science, where appropriate. But while the explicit section of 1992 on philosophy was now absent, its disappearance was merely strategic. The same social constructivist view, sometimes subtly and sometimes blatantly, shaped the document from one end to the other. The pages were practically soaked in phrases centering on the word "constructing," five times on some pages – from the introduction, which announced the "principle" that "in science, students ask questions [and] construct explanations," to the final pages where we find the admonition that "college science courses [too] should engage students in . . . constructing personal meaning."

Nowhere did there appear a statement that scientists seek to find regularities in nature, or to discover and explain new phenomena or laws, or to reach shareable and testable insights about the lawfulness and order of the natural world. By these proposed standards, Madame Curie did not discover radium, she "constructed" it. Doing science is considered there on a par with constructing technical artifacts or social policies. From this extremist point of view, intended for the indoctrination of generations of teachers and students, the document elaborated some consequences. For example, nowhere is the student encouraged to consult as sources of information other, "external" resources such as books (not a single science book is named), atlases, science museums, planetaria, or science television programs. Nor is the teacher considered to be a resource person who already knows facts and who will provide them at the appropriate moment. The students supposedly must live in a closed, solipsistic universe. In companionship with one another, these youngsters will have to construct whatever knowledge about science they will get. As a result, one of the early examples given showed it might take days or weeks for a class to "construct" the concept of density.

One way of understanding what happened to the draft of the standards was that the "inquiry" method of learning and teaching – a current favorite among teachers, particularly in the lower grades – had been hijacked and carried to extremes. The inquiry style itself, while necessarily far from really "doing science," has much to recommend it for pre-college schools (as did its now-defunct series of predecessors, such as case studies, "discovery," etc.). It also seems to make young students feel good

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about science learning. But that does not mean that inquiry must be limited to the mental "construction" by the learner, or that scientific research as such should be presented by that model. Also, the teacher should not fail to challenge students to perform at the highest level each can achieve. I believe the word "excellence" was mentioned only once in passing in the draft. Nowhere did I see an attempt to get teachers actively to discover and nurture any extra or exceptional ability, the kind that might make it more likely to produce a future scientist of special ability. Nor did the standards suggest that teachers should get more adequate training in science than most of them do now.

The philosophy underlying this version of course forbade using such phrases as the progress of science or the evolution of scientific ideas. The main engine of change in science was presented as having largely been the result of "changes in commitment." "Changes in commitments . . . forge change commonly referred to as advances in science." Thus scientific advances are only tautological concepts, because anything scientists make a commitment to is by definition an advance. What counts is not the discovery of some new aspect of nature, but the sociological and psychological interaction of the scientists. This view is part of the famous, banalized picture of scientific work as the jump from one paradigm to another as a result of changes of commitment in the social group, rather than advancement through the enlargement of the range of applicability of older conceptions, or the simplifications of theories, or the breakdown of old barriers between fields.

Happily, this is not the end of the story of these National Standards for Science Education. The final draft will be quite different, and acceptable to scientists and students, teachers and parents, as it surely must be if the standards are to be effective. But it is important to see how long it took for scientists to wake up to what was happening and to go into action. At a meeting that brought together some scientists to look over the 1994 draft I have just discussed, a few of them finally made clear how unacceptable this version was. *Science* magazine went so far as to say that one of the physicists at that meeting confessed that he "went ballistic" after reading the draft. Others there also objected strongly to the bizarre flaws. With Bruce Alberts, the new president of the National Academy of Sciences, taking particular interest in education and science, a much better outcome could be expected, and a much improved version was put into circulation for final comment and release in December 1995. If there is a flight from reason and science to extremism, of which the early stages of this episode were to a certain extent an illustration, what is required most of all is simply that some scientists and their organizations begin to pay

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attention to how the process of the delegitimation of science operates, and to defend themselves.

There is a faint analogy here to a lesson from the Gray Board hearings in the matter of Robert Oppenheimer. In that case, it was Oppenheimer himself who was so strangely ineffective when his integrity was attacked. He seemed to acquiesce in his own destruction. But it is important to recall how Oppenheimer explained his inaction later. He said that during the hearings, "I had very little sense of self." His friend David Lilienthal, when also browbeaten during his testimony on behalf of Oppenheimer, saw the rigged hearing procedure for what it was, and commented, "When I saw what they were doing to Oppenheimer, I was ready to throw chairs." Oppenheimer himself, the architect of enormous weapons, was not a man to throw chairs. I too don't advise throwing furniture. The point I am making by this analogy is that the scientific community, and its organizations, will have to learn quickly that one's moral authority depends on having a good "sense of self," and to act in its self-defense when attacked.

A similar distortion of the place given to science and education in the culture of the United States today can be found in another quasi-official document which is intended to have a profound effect on schooling. That document is the recently released National Standards for United States History for Grades 5-12, subtitled "Exploring the American Experience." It, too, has distinguished official patronage, in this case principally from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Department of Education, and has benefited from the labors of "hundreds of classroom teachers of history [and] dozens of talented and active academic historians in the nation," plus many professional and scholarly organizations. This document, too, has been in the news, attacked and defended for various reasons. But little has been said about the role given to science and technology in the current draft, which is to guide how history is taught to each youngster during eight years of schooling. Again, the intentions were honorable, the labors onerous, but the results provide a window on the perplexed soul of our culture, and reveal the same animus.

One would expect to find that science, technology, and medicine would play a major role in the account these standards should urge for the study of our country's history, just as these fields have in fact played a major role in our history itself, especially so during the past one and a half centuries. But the set of interlocking standards and examples in the published history standards refers to such topics only very infrequently, briefly, and anemically. What is lacking, first of all, is any sense that science and technology in the United States, certainly since World War II, are in most fields culturally and intellectually strongest compared with the

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rest of the advanced nations. The existence in the United States of the development of world-class science and technology, achieved in this century by the work of millions, is an historic fact of real importance – quite apart from and in addition to the effects on society. (A similar but less severe case can be made against the treatment of the arts, to which that document pays attention in a quite slanted and narrowly selective way.)

The most responsible attempt in the history standards document appears on the page before the very end: "Students should be able to demonstrate understanding of the modern American economy by . . . evaluating the importance of scientific and technological change on the workplace and productivity." A few examples of students' achievements intended to meet such standards are given on that page. But apart from appearing very late in the implied curriculum, the examples are entirely preoccupied with the "effects of" or "impacts of" technologies, rather than establishing first their existence and how they came into our history in the first place. As one observer noted (in *The History Newsletter of the American Institute of Physics*): "Science is [here] implicitly viewed as something which has descended from elsewhere. . . . Technology, too, is treated as an external body which 'impacts' upon society. . . . An entire standard devoted to 'the second industrial revolution' is concerned solely with how it 'changed the nature and conditions of work,' for example in the employment of children." And he adds, "The proposed standards represent the current thought of a cross-section of leaders in American primary and secondary education in academic history. Evidently if students are to learn what society has done in the past to nurture science, how science has affected the development of technology, and where scientific thought had stood within American culture, in the future as in the past, they should not look to the typical high school history course."

A glance through the published volume shows how uncomfortably true this critique is. Thus an example of student activity is to "examine the influence of MTV on popular culture," with a special question posed: "How does Madonna symbolize the popular culture created by MTV?" Madonna and MTV may be of historic importance; but how did television itself come to be? And what about the telegraph, the telephone, radio, video, the laser, and the transistor, all surely known to students, and whose economic impacts have been vast? Would it not be helpful to put a little of the story of their American sources into the Standards for United States History, the more so as we are now in the Information Age?

The producers of these history standards have explained that they did not want to make lists of people, since this may be the job of the ultimate

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producers of curricula based on these standards. Yet one wonders whether it would have handicapped curriculum designers if Samuel Morse, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and others like them had at least been mentioned (not to speak of Benjamin Franklin, the Newton of electricity). I asked some of my colleagues what they would like to see included for study under such a set of national standards for American history, and I was flooded with suggestions: electric lighting; a whole slew of chemical inventions – and particularly synthetic rubber, without which America, cut off from natural rubber in World War II, could hardly have entered the war successfully; something might be said about the finding and refining of petroleum, on which the development of the automobile depended; the invention and application of digital computers; the major immunizing interventions such as the Salk and Sabine contributions to the conquest of polio; before that, the discovery of penicillin by Fleming, and the age of antibiotic therapy that followed; the role of smallpox in history and the elimination of that scourge; similarly the conquest of diseases transmitted by contaminated drinking water. How about the Wright brothers' experiments and designs? Is it possible to have aircraft missing from the history of the United States?

Under these standards, students should be able to "demonstrate understanding of World War II and how the Allies prevailed." Good. But radar is missing, which really helped win the war. And from seventh to twelfth grade, students are invited to examine the "decision to use atomic weapons during World War II." But there is again nothing said about why it was thought necessary to build such weapons in the first place. And that is more than ever an important part of the story, one that must not be neglected or left to revisionist popularizations.

During this century, an increasing understanding of genetics has resulted in major advances in biology, medicine, and agriculture. One may leave to the science standards the description of the Watson-Crick model. But the fact of the discovery of the structure of DNA itself in 1953 was a world-historic event. Might it not merit one line of print in the history standards? Last but not least, students should know not only about the history of racism and Social Darwinism in the nineteenth century, to which a good deal of space is given in these standards, but also of its refutation by anthropological and related sciences in this century. This would be a good place to show that the efforts of scientists have helped to change and expand the concept of human rights in modern times.

All these examples of gaps indicate that they were not accidental. They stem from a particular contemporary vision of what counts in history, and science and technology are low indeed on that agenda. The predictable reply to such suggestions will be that the document is already

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too long, and that nothing could be squeezed out to make room. To which I would gladly respond, "Just let me try." In fact, a few scientists are now asking the history standards writers to reconsider the omissions – again in the spirit of correcting a false image of our culture.

There is a third current example in which an enterprise with national scope, distinguished patronage, and years of labor resulted in a severely flawed educational presentation of science and technology in our time. This is of course the exhibit entitled "Science in American Life," now showing as a permanent installation at the National Museum of American History of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington (not to be confused with the plans for the Enola Gay exhibition at the National Air and Space Museum). There has been a great deal of public commentary, pro and con. As *Science* magazine put it, after the commissioning of this exhibit by the American Chemical Society at the cost of $5.3 million, there ensued a "five-year battle between an advisory committee appointed by the ACS and curators at the Smithsonian's Museum of American History. At the heart of the battle was the portrayal of science. . . ." As one of the historians associated with the project in the early stages reported, "the chemists came in for a rude shock." "They wanted something like the Du Pont slogan – 'better living through chemistry' – [but the head curator] and others wanted pollution and death." A second member of the advisory committee added, "We spent most of our political capital making sure it wasn't a complete exposé of the hazards of science." And yet a third member of the advisory committee wrote: "Several historians assigned to the curatorial team made no secret of their disdain for 'big science' and of everything they believed it represented. Their political ideology opposed industry, and dismissed chemical manufacturers as 'polluters.' Eventually the lead curators . . . wound up creating a largely negative [exhibit]."

This is not the place or time to rehearse the flaws of that exhibit, which I have seen. What I do want to point out here is why, in this case, as with the National Standards for Science, there is, after all, hope that the prejudicial and unbalanced representation of science for the education of a national audience is going to be corrected. The main reason for this rethinking is that while all the individual objections from scientists and others at first made no impression on the Smithsonian and its curators, at last a scientific society – specifically the American Physical Society – blew the whistle loudly. Asked to do so by his elected council of the Society, the president of the APS, the Nobelist Burton Richter, reported to the Secretary of the Smithsonian that APS members who had visited the exhibit "Science in American Life" had found the portrayal of science trivializing its accomplishments and exaggerating any negative consequences. They were concerned that the presentation was seriously

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misleading, and inhibited the public's ability to make informed decisions on the future use of science and technology. Acknowledging that examples of misuse do belong in such an exhibit, he stressed that what was missing was balance. He offered the services of the APS to work with the Smithsonian and with others to develop a more appropriate exhibition, and indeed arranged for the whole Executive Committee of the APS to visit the Smithsonian staff in Washington. On that occasion, the flaws were pointed out, and the possibility of a rethinking seemed achievable.

Three-and-a-half months later, the chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Chemical Society also made the principal concerns of his society known to the Smithsonian. He described the constant frustration, over several years, as the Smithsonian staff consistently ignored the advice given them by an advisory committee jointly put together by the ACS and the Smithsonian. He spoke of arrogance and high-handedness on the part of some of the museum personnel assigned to the project, the demonstration of a strong built-in bias against science, and the tendency to revise and rewrite history. He too offered to provide advice and personal attention to result in a more balanced presentation, one which would repair the damage done to the reputations of both organizations. As a result of these communications, the Smithsonian has promised to revise at least the most egregious parts of the "Science in American Life" exhibit. When that actually happens, the principle I am advocating will have been demonstrated again: The moral authority of science, as of any professional field, depends importantly on its assertion of a sense of self.

To our Romantic rebels, and to the other purveyors of the equation that science equals pollution and death, the intervention of the scientists in the standards story, and of the physical and chemical societies in the Smithsonian exhibit, will probably be only additional proofs of their point of view. Theirs is a win-win position: If scientists do not object to an unbalanced presentation, then it will have its intended effect on the populace. And if scientists do object and bring about reconsiderations of the documents and exhibition, that will be said only to illustrate how scientists wield undue influence. But the fact is, as I noted, that the scientists and their organizations until recently have usually been too negligent and reluctant to speak out and defend themselves against the dissemination of false images. They seem to begrudge any moment away from the exciting work in their labs. Perhaps they are now beginning to discover the costs and dangers of letting others define the ideological, educational and cultural context of science in today's society.

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ROBERT S. WISTRICH

Reshaping Israeli Identity

As in most of the Western world today, historical revisionism is in fashion in Israel. Established views of the past are being criticized, reassessed, or openly debunked. The heroic view of the Israeli War of Independence as a struggle of the few facing the many, or of a uniquely peace-loving Zionist movement against intransigently hostile Arab enemies, has been challenged by a new generation of Israeli historians; so, too, have the alleged "myths" that over half-a-million Palestinian Arabs voluntarily fled Palestine in 1948 (or expected to return in the wake of conquering Arab armies) rather than be expelled from Israel by force. During the past decade it has become a commonplace of much Israeli historiography to question and undermine these and the other "myths" at the core of Israeli self-perception, those which created the structures of thinking and propaganda that long shaped Israeli policy. With the war of 1948 (and virtually all of Israel's subsequent wars), the heroes of Zionism and Israel have also come in for a battering.

The visionary and charismatic founder of the movement, Theodor Herzl, has been reduced in stature to a highly narcissistic, conflict-ridden, neurotic personality. The revered founding-father and first Prime Minister of the Jewish State, David Ben-Gurion, has been accused of inactivity and indifference during the Holocaust, of favoring the "transfer" of Arabs out of Israel in 1948, and of subsequently squandering opportunities to achieve peace with surrounding Arab states. The indomitable Golda Meir is today frequently execrated for her total inflexibility towards the Palestinians, while the legendary Moshe Dayan has been debunked as a selfish, womanizing megalomaniac. The cherished image of the early pioneers and hardy Zionist warriors like Joseph Trumpeldor (along with the myth of Tel-Hai where he died in defense of the Galilee) has also suffered, as has that of the 1948 generation and of Israel's leaders since her independence. Whether it be the defenders of Masada and the revolt of Bar-Kochba nearly two thousand years ago or Operation Entebbe in 1975, the Maccabees or Palmach, Joshua or Ariel Sharon, it would appear that many Israelis have no further need of larger-than-life heroes, least of all role models of reckless bravery or military prowess.

The assault on "heroic" idealism did not, of course, begin overnight and probably has its roots in the attitudes of the skeptical generation that came of age in the 1960s. The disillusion generated by the scarring trau-

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mas of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the disastrous Lebanon adventure in the 1980s, and the Palestinian uprising doubtless reinforced this trend and paved the way for a new iconoclasm. So, too, did the impact of the electronic media, especially on a younger generation for whom pop stars, comedians, and basketball stars are better known and loved today than Israeli politicians or Zionist ideologues. In contemporary Israel, with its technological sophistication, its more easygoing individualism and all-too-cynical knowingness, nothing, it would seem, is sacred any more. The old heroes, the ideal of self-sacrificing patriotism, collectivist ideologies, the cult of the Sabra (native-born Israeli) seem increasingly out of date – at least to much of the liberal and leftist intelligentsia or the new professionals seeking access to the warming prosperity of the global economy. It is the stock exchange rather than the Kibbutz, technocracy instead of Zionist visions, the dream of quick profits not Hebrew prophets, which set the tone for much of present-day Israeli society.

In this kind of climate in which there are no great causes left, debunking the founding fathers and myths of Israel has become a national sport. For the left, this is a welcome part of the new maturity in Israel, a healthy and necessary process of adapting to modernity and freeing the country from its imprisonment in outmoded ideologies and dogmas. In that sense, the demystification of Israeli history is viewed as a positive contribution to the peace process. Moreover, it tends to emphasize the virtues of negotiation and compromise rather than the mystique of self-sacrifice and death in the service of the homeland, encouraged by an earlier generation of Israelis. By the same token, this trend is seen on the right as undermining the ethos, the ideals, and the goals of Zionism – a blow to the self-sustaining convictions and belief-systems that have animated the country from its inception. This assault on the founding myths is often presented as a form of decadence, as the cultural expression of defeatism, and as a retreat from the dominant Zionist ideology which can lead only to disaster.

This is a debate about nothing less than history itself. The focus is not only on the Israeli-Palestinian or the Jewish-Arab conflict, which has taken up so much international attention from politicians, academics, or the media. It is also about those internal Jewish factors which have shaped Israeli collective consciousness and national-cultural identity during the past one hundred years – in all their pluralism, ambivalence, and contradictions. Naturally these myths, memories, and traumas did not develop in a vacuum or as the pure product of internal development within twentieth-century Jewish history. They have all along interacted with external forces in the non-Jewish world and been profoundly modified by confrontation and conflict with the Arab-Muslim Middle Eastern envi-

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ronment. But Israeli society and culture also have their own inner historical dynamics which have for too long been ignored, whether through ignorance or design.

The deconstruction of national mythologies is, of course, a perfectly legitimate and necessary element in seeking to understand any long-term historical process. But it needs to be remembered that myth is something more subtle than merely an erroneous belief or dogma held to against all the historical evidence. The popular usage which equates myth with fallacies that can be disproved by logical reasoning, or the simple reference to historical facts, is frequently accepted in a naive fashion by revisionist historians. New documentation and new interpretations of historical events based upon them are a normal and natural part of the evolution of historiography in any society. Demythicizing a past which has been invested with a quasi-sacred character, or pointing out that events which have been given unique significance by one generation may not retain this meaning for its successor, is equally natural. After all, most interpretations of history are to some extent based on an arbitrary selection of events and can easily assume a mythical character. Israeli history and historiography are no exception to this rule, and like the writing of history elsewhere, have inevitably been influenced by ideology. But the process of de-ideologizing that history and stripping it of its allegedly mythical aspects is by the same token not immune to similar objections of selectivity and arbitrariness. Is "revisionist" history, for example, any less subject to an ideological or political agenda, to the conscious (or unconscious) desire to create counter-myths, than the very orthodoxy against which it rebels?

Myths can simultaneously perform many functions. Not all of them are negative or merely justificatory rationalizations of a particular status quo. They may indeed provide legitimation for existing social and political practices, for a dominant elite, social group, or ideology. Myth may also be intended as a mobilizing agent to galvanize commitment or identification with a cause, as has often been the case all over the world in the past two centuries. Above all, most myths are to some degree narratives that seek to anchor the present in the past – and the Zionist "myths" under attack today do not differ from this pattern. Myths seen in this light, as a special kind of narrative, as symbolic statements or frames of reference which give meaning to the past, are not necessarily false or harmful examples of pseudo-history. Their true significance more often lies in what they can tell us about the ways in which a particular nation, social group, or set of individuals seeks to organize its collective memory and to establish a distinctive identity. The process of analyzing or deconstructing myth is most revealing precisely when it unveils the deeper social and un-

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conscious needs that are served by the construction or symbolic invention of a particular national past.

In the case of Zionism, its political leaders from Herzl onward often displayed an acute understanding of the constructive role of myth in the nation-building process. The will to nationhood in a dispersed, powerless people like Diaspora Jewry had to be forged against a formidable array of obstacles, both external and internal. Not only did Zionism operate under difficult and frequently unfavorable conditions, both in the Diaspora and in Mandatory Palestine, but even after the creation of Israel its leaders have had to navigate in an intensely hostile and unenviable geopolitical environment. Moreover, before 1948 (and to a lesser extent since then) Israeli and Zionist leaders had to face considerable opposition to the realization of their goals from within the Jewish people. In these adverse conditions the establishment and consolidation of a coherent and distinctive Israeli identity has been a remarkable historical feat. It would have been virtually impossible without the ability to harness such potent "myths" as the ingathering of the exiles, the upbuilding of Zion as a model society, the creation of a new Hebrew or "Jewish" type and an overarching vision of national redemption. The task was rendered even more complex by the relative lack of Jewish political experience during two millennia, the tension between Judaism as a religion and the ideal of statehood, the clash between nationalist particularism and universalist ideals in Jewish history, as well as the structural weaknesses of the Zionist movement. Even without the devastating blow of the Holocaust and the wall of Arab-Muslim hostility that confronted the new Israeli state, the challenge of constructing a viable Israel would have been formidable. To convert an urban-based Diasporic people, whose cohesion had already been significantly eroded by cultural assimilation, into a "normal" nation rooted in its own land and Hebrew language, was a huge task even under the most optimal set of circumstances.

The ideological synthesis of socialist Zionism and the driving myths that shaped Israeli society in its early years reflected many of these imperatives, constraints, and challenges. The emphasis on *mamlakhtiut* ("statism"), on national security, unity, rootedness, pioneering settlement, and military virtues, as well as the priority attached to a "melting pot" ideology, seemed appropriate to the immediate imperatives of survival under adverse conditions. Similarly, the "heroic" Spartan ethos, so decried by current fashion, was in many respects a functional necessity for a country poor in natural resources, surrounded by enemies, and dependent on a high level of motivation, collective willpower, and implacable determination to re-root itself in the land. The dominant myths underwent a subtle shift after 1967 as territorial expansion and rule over a large Pal-

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estinian population created a new set of problems and dilemmas. The future of the occupied territories, questions of borders and ultimate national goals, the globalizing of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and a changed relation with the Diaspora became contentious and central issues in Israeli politics.

New forms of integral nationalism and religious fundamentalism related to the sanctity of the Land of Israel began to change the contours of Israeli identity. The balance between its constituent elements was further affected by the erosion of the dominant Zionist-socialist pioneering ethos in the early 1970s; by the crisis of confidence in the Labor leadership and in the military elites after the Yom Kippur War; by the gradual rise in the influence of Israel's underprivileged Sephardim, which helped bring Likud to power in 1977; by growing settlement across the green line and violent confrontation with Palestinians in the territories; and by the sharpening divisions between the religious and secular segments of Israeli society. The decline of the internal national consensus and the increasingly harsh criticism and condemnation of Israeli policies abroad were two of the most obvious symptoms of malaise in the 1970s and 1980s. Inevitably, they too began to change the contours of Israeli identity, the focus of its collective consciousness and memory, and the perception of Israel's role in the world. This was the context in which Zionist ideology itself came to be questioned from within and in which the older nation-building myths, which had already lost much of their mobilizing power, were challenged.

Israel's international isolation and the successive traumas of the Lebanon War, the Intifada, and the unaccustomed Israeli passivity during the Gulf War provided important external stimuli for this fundamental debate about the means and ends, the goals and purpose of the Zionist project. Alongside these stresses and strains, Israeli society was becoming increasingly Westernized in the 1980s – more materialistic, individualist, and consumer-oriented. In this de-ideologized environment, there was far greater scope for a plurality of identities, for recognizing the validity of the private realm and the needs of the individual. A flourishing indigenous Hebrew-language culture and literary experimentation encouraged a new freedom in addressing time-honored ideals and deflating established myths. The era of grand ideological syntheses appeared to be over, and increasingly, calls for "normalization" that reflected a palpable war-weariness and a longing for peace could be heard. The Palestinian question could no longer be swept under the carpet in the 1980s and more and more impinged on the Israeli collective psyche as a problem that directly affected the identity of the Israeli people and its state.

At the same time the belated awareness of the Holocaust – a process that had begun in the early 1960s – attained new heights and emerged as

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a dominant myth in cementing the national identity. Its role in the Israeli collective memory underlined the degree to which the Zionist rupture with the Diasporic past of Jewry was beginning to break down. The image of the Holocaust as the nadir of Jewish powerlessness in *Galut* (exile), and the stigma attached to it, gave way to an increasingly strong symbolic identification with this traumatic memory. The traditional Zionist contrast between tough, resourceful Israelis who make their own history and the passive Diaspora Jews who went like "lambs to the slaughter" has been steadily muted. There is much less need today to dramatize the rupture with the Diasporic past, to create a counter-model to the exiled Jew. In its place has come a more realistic and humane approach to suffering, less eagerness to embrace death in the heroic mold, and a much greater interest of Israelis in their own personal and collective roots, which lie after all in Diaspora traditions.

In the more diversified Israeli society of the 1990s, the melting pot has been replaced by a marked trend towards ethnic particularism, localism, and the cultivation of Diasporic roots. The two thousand years of Jewish exile in the Diaspora are no longer perceived as a potential threat to the viability of Israeli statehood, but as an integral part of Israel's past, to be integrated into its contemporary history. An Israeli identity, divorced from its Jewish sources, therefore seems increasingly unlikely despite the tension that still exists between the Zionist aspiration and the reality of the Diaspora. In the 1990s, even the "ingathering of the exiles" – the ultimate raison d'etre of Zionist ideology – has assumed new contours. During the past five years the mass *aliyah* of over five hundred thousand Jews into Israel from the former Soviet Union has changed the face of the nation in unexpected ways. These Russian-speaking immigrants, counter to the more Zionist orientated wave of the 1970s, show little inclination to identify with Israeli culture. Instead they have created their own sub-culture in its midst – an unprecedented phenomenon which, given the size of this immigration (ten percent of the total Jewish population of Israel), is likely to continue in this generation. The xenophobic hostility and stereotypic responses of much of the native population, the media, and even some politicians to this *aliyah* suggest that Israel may have reached a saturation point in its current ability to absorb new immigrants.

Such tensions and difficulties are probably inevitable in the building of a sovereign society and in their own way are the imperfect outcome of the very successes of Zionism in accomplishing many of its original aims. On the eve of the Holocaust, the Jews of Palestine represented a mere three percent of world Jewry. In the past fifty-five years, Israel has absorbed one third of the entire Jewish people, and by early in the twenty-

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first century it may well contain over fifty percent of the world Jewish population. This is a phenomenal transformation achieved under democratic rule (flawed though it has often been for its Arab citizens) in conditions of siege and continuous warfare during the last half a century. Such achievements are easy to overlook in the atmosphere of fashionable cynicism, frustration, debunking, and self-denigration that has seized many Israelis.

The two bullets that took the life of Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's Prime Minister, war hero, and symbol of the 1948 Palmach generation, cast an oblique but revealing light on the evolving national trends. In a sense, the tragedy of Rabin's assassination has (perhaps temporarily) reversed the unbridled attacks on Israel's founding myths or put them in a new perspective. Following the murder, there was a sudden idealization – even mythification – of Israel's leader who only a short time before had been savagely criticized. He had been accused of being indecisive, uncommunicative, insensitive, and lacking in empathy for the Israeli public, even as he pursued policies that were irreversibly affecting the country's future. After the assassination, Rabin appeared in a new guise as the wise, caring, bold leader – unhesitating in his search for peace. To the thousands of Israeli youths holding vigils and lighting candles at Tel Aviv's Kikar Malchei Yisrael (now Itzhak Rabin Square), he was the "victim of peace" covered with the halo of martyrdom. (The reading from the Torah the week of the murder was, amazingly, the "Binding of Isaac.")

The euphoric rally at which he had sung the "Song of Peace" just moments before his death added a tragic poignancy and contributed to the subsequent sanctification of Rabin. The gruff, plain-speaking soldier, known in Israel as "Mr. Security," had never seemed at such peace with himself. The shock of the killing was all the greater since he had fallen at the hands of a fellow Israeli Jew, a Sabra like himself, who had gunned him down at point-blank range. His murderer, a young law student from Bar-Ilan, a product of the explosive Middle Eastern cocktail of intense nationalism and religious fundamentalism, saw in Rabin a "traitor" to his integralist vision of the Land of Israel. A Jewish Israeli mirror-image of the Hamas or Islamic Jihad, Yigal Amir seemed light years away from Rabin's secularist values. Yet he, too, represents a facet of the polarized political culture of Israel and cannot be so easily dismissed as a mere aberration.

It remains to be seen whether the death of Rabin – the last living link to the generation of 1948 – will lead to a more mature, tolerant concept of political discourse in Israel. The immediate beneficiary is Rabin's partner in the peace process and long-standing rival, Shimon Peres, who is likely to win handsomely in the coming Israeli elections. If so, Yigal Amir

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will have accomplished the exact opposite of his intention to halt the peace process. Rabin's martyrdom, leading to his consecration as the legendary lost leader, will have ensured the end of the dream of the integral Land of Israel. Rabin in death is more potent a myth than he was in his long and distinguished career as soldier and statesman. One recalls the famous saying of the French Catholic poet, Charles Péguy, made in connection with the Dreyfus Affair, "Everything begins as mystique and ends in politics." As Israel faces the most important crossroads of its history in the 1996 elections, Rabin's mystique – for good or bad – has become a powerful political weapon.

Eleanor Clark

An Early Friend and Contributor
1914-1996

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EUGENE GOODHEART

The Postmodern Liberalism of Richard Rorty

Richard Rorty's distinction is that he has given liberalism a postmodern expression. There are other contemporary liberal philosophers, most notably John Rawls, but they do not qualify as postmodern in the ideological sense. Rorty's influence has been considerable in our intellectual life generally and in the literary academy in particular. In reformulating long-standing philosophical problems, he has created the impression of having solved them. It is a real question, however, whether he has not simply avoided or repressed them.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of postmodernism is its obsession with the perspectival limits of knowledge and judgment. Perspectivists like Rorty tell us that objectivity is an illusion, that words like "transcendence," "metaphysics," "rationalism," and "universalism" refer to an unattainable reality and only create anxiety in us. These words have their provenance in the apparently antithetical discourses of religion and the Enlightenment. In the political sphere they are susceptible to appropriation by ideologies supportive of tyranny. For perspectivists, the words that truly describe our condition are "contingent," "mortal," "finite": modest words that not only express what we are but that also imply a respect for those who are different from us. And yet the vocabulary of universalism remains a powerful temptation even for liberals because of its association with the Enlightenment. How is the temptation and the anxiety connected with it to be overcome? Rorty's advice is that we change our vocabulary. We need to purge our language of unnecessary anxiety-inducing distinctions like the one between "rational" and "irrational" or between "subjectivism" and "objectivism" or even between "truth" and "falsity." In the wake of the verbal fallout, we will have the non-objectivist (not the subjectivist), the non-rationalist (not the irrationalist). With the evaporation of traditional distinctions, the insoluble problems of epistemology will simply vanish. Rorty's work is in the spirit of Wittengstein's strenuous effort to refocus thinking away from metaphysics – without Wittgenstein's strenuousness. Liberalism will at last have a language appropriate to its pluralistic ideal and its respect for the private individual.

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Rorty places himself in a community of anti-foundationalist philosophers (Isaiah Berlin, Bernard Williams, Wilfred Sellars, among others) and cites them repeatedly for support, creating the impression of the self-evidency of his views. But "anti-foundationalism" is a large covering term that may conceal significant differences – for instance, the efforts of certain anti-foundational philosophers to find common ground among perspectives and their belief in the possibility of finding it. The following passage from *Moral Luck* by one of Rorty's colleagues, Bernard Williams, is a good example of how they differ:

> There is a further proposition which some of these will believe (among them, I believe, Berlin): that there is no common currency in which these gains and losses of value can be computed, that values, or at least the most basic values, are not only plural but in a real sense incommensurable. Some other people, however, sympathetic to the general drift of the argument so far, may at this point protest. To say that values necessarily conflict, and that the affirmation of some necessarily involves losses with regard to others, does not entail that they are incommensurable. The reference to *losses* does not in itself entail, on the other hand, that they are commensurable: one could register a loss in one dimension of value without comparing the amount of that loss with another dimension of value. But unless some comparison can be made, then nothing rational can be said at all about what overall outcome is to be preferred, nor about which side of a conflict is to be chosen – and that is certainly a despairing conclusion. Some overall comparisons can be made, and if they can, then to some degree, it will be said, these values must be commensurable.

Unlike Rorty, Williams remains attached to the term "rational," because he cannot imagine an alternative basis for making intelligent discriminations between possible outcomes. What would be for Williams an occasion for despair, however, is for Rorty an occasion for complacency. Even the most difficult case leaves Rorty, writing in his volume, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity,* unfazed: "This would mean giving up the idea that liberalism could be justified, and Nazi or Marxist enemies of liberalism refuted, by driving the latter up against an argumentative wall – forcing them to admit that liberal freedom has a 'moral privilege' which their own values lacked. From the point of view I have been recommending, any attempt to drive one's opponent up against the wall in this way (the way of justification) fails when the wall against which he is driven comes to be seen as one more vocabulary, one more way of describing things."

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I will return to the matter of Rorty's complacency and its political implications, but I want first to address "redescription," the method that he advocates for relieving our epistemological anxieties. What is not obvious is its coerciveness, its readiness to dictate the terms of liberal culture. It shows in its intolerance of metaphysical or religious views considered to be inimical to liberal culture. As Rorty explains it:

> . . . in its ideal form, the culture of liberalism would be one which was enlightened, secular, through and through. It would be one in which no trace of divinity remained, either in the form of a divinized world or a divinized self. Such a culture would have no room for the notion that there are nonhuman forces to which human beings should be responsible. It would drop, or drastically reinterpret, not only the idea of holiness but those of "devotion to truth" and "of fulfillment of the deepest needs of the spirit."

Rorty, it would seem, is fulfilling the uncompleted anti-religious projects of the Enlightenment: uncompleted, because it sublimated the god terms of Christianity in its own world view. It divinized world and self. We find this view in Carl Becker's *The Heavenly City of Eighteenth-Century Philosophers,* in which he argues that the philosophers had secularized Christian religion. By redescribing the Enlightenment, Rorty effectively rids it of all religious associations. Having given up the idea of justification by rational argument, he does not feel obliged to justify his ideal liberal society. He is the lawgiver, who provides it with its authoritative definition. The heroes of Rorty's society are, surprisingly, the strong poet and the utopian revolutionary. (One wonders how he can reconcile his exalting of the strong poet with his project of de-divinization. What does he make of strong poets who divinize the world? And what would a liberal literary criticism with anti-religious motives make of *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost?* Such criticism would demystify rather than celebrate the strong poet.)

The denial of God is an inalienable right in a liberal society, and it is understandable that a liberal would try to resist god terms since they are associated with the absolute. But what a liberal society cannot permit is the suppression by whatever means of religious expression. The effect of Rorty's redescription is suppression. By ridding the language of god terms it denies those who have a religious appetite a vehicle for expression.

Rorty anticipates the objection that redescription may be experienced as a coercive act. "Most people do not want to be redescribed. They want to be taken on their own terms – taken seriously just as they are and just

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as they talk. The [liberal] ironist tells them that the language they seek is up for grabs by her and her kind. There is something potentially very cruel about that claim." Rorty defends himself against the charge that his conception of redescription is coercive by insisting that its aim is not the transformation of others but the moral autonomy of the redescriber:

> It is only when a Romantic intellectual begins to want his private self to serve as a model for other human beings that his politics tends to become anti-liberal. When he begins to think that other human beings have a moral duty to achieve the same inner autonomy as he himself has achieved, then he begins to think about political and social changes which will help them do so. Then he may begin to think that he has a moral duty to bring about these changes, whether his fellow citizens want them or not.

Rorty provides the example of Proust:

> All [Proust] wanted was to get out from under finite powers by making their finitude evident. He did not want to befriend power, nor to be in a position to empower others, but simply to free himself from the description of himself offered by the people he had met. He wanted not to be merely the person that these other people thought they knew him to be, not to be frozen in the frame of a photograph shot from another person's perspective.

One hardly needs to particularize this characterization of redescription in the name of Proust. It represents an effort of all thoughtful, independent-minded writers (and not only writers) to extricate themselves from alien understandings of their lives and to express in their own language their self-understandings. The desire, according to Rorty, is not to communicate and persuade others of the truth of one's self-description for other lives (not "to be in a position to empower others"), but to achieve the satisfaction of extricating oneself from the authority of others. This is an account of Proust's achievement that denies him the power and ambition of the strong poet to influence his readers' conceptions of themselves. But it does reveal Rorty's bias for a liberal "community" of persons content with their own private existence, largely indifferent to the public realm. It shows him as sensitive to the dangers, potential and actual, in the intellectual's will to power. Elsewhere he gives the example of *1984* in which the inner party intellectual O'Brien compels Winston Smith to redescribe himself in O'Brien's own terms.

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Rorty's sensitivity to danger, however, doesn't communicate to his own practice, when he imposes his own atheistic values on other human beings in an attempt to de-divinize a whole culture. This is the most serious instance of coercive practice, but hardly the only one. For example, Rorty reads a passage of a poem by Philip Larkin about "the fear of dying, of extinction" and rebukes both the phrase and the sentiment behind it. Rorty tells us that there is no such thing as a fear of inexistence, only of some concrete loss. Here is the passage:

> And once you have walked the length of your mind, what
> You command is as clear as a lading-list
> Anything else must not, for you, be thought
> To exist.
> And what's the profit? Only that, in time
> We half-identify the blind impress
> All our behavings bear, may trace it home.
> But to confess,
> On that green evening when our death begins,
> Just what it was, is hardly satisfying.
> Since it applied only to one man once,
> And that man dying.

Rorty dismisses the sentiment that it is "hardly satisfying" to trace one's own distinctiveness. He says that "Larkin is affecting to despise his own vocation, on the ground that to succeed in it would merely be to have put down on paper something which applied only to one man once/ And that one dying." He characterizes the sentiment as an affectation not on the basis of a close reading of the poem, the sort of reading a literary critic would perform in which the reader watches for tensions and listens for tone, but rather on the basis of a philosophical or theoretical prejudice derived from Harold Bloom, that it is enough to be a strong poet and that Larkin knows or should know that one "does not have to find something common to all men at all times," a meaningless universalist ambition. Rorty speaks of the passage as a reminder of the quarrel between philosophy and poetry, in which paradoxically Larkin is on the side of philosophy and Rorty of poetry. What is at stake for me in this quarrel are not the rival merits of either view, but the presumptuous claim that Larkin is affecting an attitude and cannot mean what he is saying. There is simply no evidence for this claim. One can only surmise that Rorty is engaged in the coerciveness of redescription from a need to as-

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similate Larkin to his own *theoretical* discourse. He is in effect prescribing how Larkin should feel about the prospect of dying. The exercise of literary criticism hardly constitutes a threat to liberal culture, but it reflects a habit of mind inconsistent with liberalism.

Rorty's defense of redescription comes down to the assertion that it is unavoidable, everybody does it. "It is a generic trait of the intellectual" of whatever persuasion. But it does not follow that it is his only trait or always an admirable one. In *Consequences of Pragmatism,* Rorty disputes the view of Charles Taylor that "somebody's own vocabulary is always the best vocabulary for understanding what he is doing, that his own explanation of what he is doing is what we want," reducing it to absurdity by offering the worst case scenario. "There are, after all, cases in which the other person's, or culture's explanation of what it's up to is so primitive, or so nutty that we brush it aside." There are also instances in which self-descriptions are superior to descriptions by others. In determining what is best, we would need something like the objective standards that Rorty believes do not exist. Even if the standard is pragmatic usefulness, the question would arise: for whom is the redescription useful, for the redescriber or the described? And what would be the standards for redescribing in either case? Without external standards, the redescriber becomes a potential source of arbitrary and coercive verbal behavior.

I want to be fair to Rorty. He has caught hold of a feature of intellectual life that we need to take seriously. He understands the risks of redescription and wants to obviate them by confining it to the private realm. But as his own practice shows, redescription has public and potentially coercive implications. Rorty's problem grows out of his *identification* of redescription with intellectual life. Imagine a conversation between redescribers: it would be a dialogue between the deaf, which of course is no dialogue at all. As Jürgen Habermas and other thinkers in the Enlightenment tradition have argued, intellectuals also have the capacity to listen to one another, to try to understand and learn from what the other is saying in his or her own terms, even to be converted. Intellectual life is a tension between understanding and appropriation. In Rorty's view, there is only appropriation, that is, redescription.

One of the most remarkable instances of this tension can be found in John Stuart Mill's essay on Coleridge in which the liberal Mill enters empathetically into the mind of the conservative Coleridge. Mill follows Coleridge's own procedure of asking not whether a received opinion is true (as if the critic could automatically assume that he possessed the standard of truth), but what it means. In order to discover his meaning, Mill must respect Coleridge's own understanding of it. The pursuit of the meaning of Coleridge's text does not exclude the question of whether it

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is true or useful; it postpones it. Perhaps the text can contribute to a determination of its truth or use value. The effect of Mill's reading may lead us to wonder whether Mill had not undergone a conversion, so responsive is he to Coleridge's ideas. But the conclusion of the essay assures us that he remains a liberal, though in the light of his experience of Coleridge, perhaps a reconstructed one. He expresses the hope that by "systematiz[ing] and rationaliz[ing] their own creed," conservatives will be "led to adopt one liberal opinion after another, as part of conservatism itself." Here is an example of the appropriative impulse to which Rorty would give the name "redescription." For liberal views to become acceptable to conservatives, they would have to be redescribed in conservative language. But much of the essay up to the conclusion shows that it is possible for a liberal to embrace conservative views without redescribing them – in Rorty's strong sense of the word. There is no reason to suppose that a reciprocal generosity would not be possible from conservatives. It may be that the intellectual generosity that Mill exhibits is the exemplary act of a rare mind and not to be expected of entire groups. Even so, anyone advocating the liberal view would want, it seems to me, to encourage such openness and affirm it as an ideal to strive for. Such openness, however, requires a belief in empathetic understanding, which Rorty's theory lacks.

If Rorty betrays the cause of liberalism in proscribing god talk, he fails in his commitment to pragmatism in not addressing the uses of religion in contemporary society. William James, his predecessor in pragmatism, knew better when, despite his own disbelief in the absolute, he granted those who needed them the right to gain what he calls "moral holidays" in pursuing the absolute. James's sense of what counts as religious experience cannot be reduced to the pursuit of the absolute. James's own religious view reflects a disbelief that "our human experience is the highest form of experience extant in the universe. I believe rather that we stand in much the same relation to the whole of the universe as our canine and feline pets do to the whole of human life. . . . Just as many of the dogs' and cats' ideals coincide with our ideals, and the dogs and cats have daily living proof of the fact, so we may well believe, on the proof that religious experience affords, that higher powers exist and are at work to save the world on ideal lines similar to our own." Given its commitment to the truth of the experience of persons, "how could pragmatism possibly deny God's existence?"

Rorty's own failure to give credence to religious experience is particularly striking given his concern for what makes for solidarity among people. He finds the binding element in "common vocabularies and common hopes," not in philosophical beliefs. "The idea that liberal so-

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cieties are bound together by philosophical beliefs seems to me ludicrous." (Ludicrous, one surmises, because philosophical beliefs, unlike hopes and vocabularies, are abstractions and not rooted in the experiences of people.) But why stop with vocabularies and hopes and not ask the question about their genealogy? He might find the answer in their religious traditions. Even atheists might discover that the vocabularies and hopes, now secularized, can be tracked to religious sources. Rorty is prevented from pursuing the line of thought I have sketched here by his reductive view of religious experience. Religion for him is little more than "the idea of postmortem rewards." The belief in personal immortality has declined or rather been transformed "from one's hopes for paradise to one's hopes for one's grandchildren." But there is more to religion than the belief in an afterlife.

In *Race Matters,* Cornel West convincingly demonstrates the need for intermediate institutions like the church in the lives of people in the inner city. He speaks in prophetic language of the great nihilistic threat to black America, "understood here not as a philosophic doctrine that there are no rational grounds for legitimate standards or authority; it is, far more, the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness and (most important) lovelessness." And he notes the value of institutions like the church in fostering "the development of character and excellence requisite for productive citizenship." Behind West is the Civil Rights movement led by a religious inspired leadership, protesting against the injustice of the state. Religious institutions have been known to play an important role in resisting secular tyranny.

I have tried to show how Rorty's redescription of liberal culture closes itself to religious thought and feelings. At the same time, Rorty's liberal ironist, the exemplary citizen of his ideal society, is characterized by a self-doubting openness that creates problems of another kind. The liberal ironist fulfills three conditions:

> (1) she has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she continually uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that arguments phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that is in touch with a power not herself.

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This is the stance of a private person who lacks the conviction necessary for action in the public sphere. Rorty's ironic tone throughout his work creates the impression of a mainly comfortable homeowner who cultivates his own garden. He is content to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, and write poetry in the evening. Even if he should wish to enter the public realm, his liberal irony does not provide the necessary resources: a communicable sense of reality, objective understandings, universifiable declarations. Openness in Rorty does not have as its aim the conclusions of mutual understanding. It serves simply as a reminder of the uncertain authority of any and all assertions and vocabularies. Whereas he criticizes religion and metaphysics, Rorty avoids politics. One may speculate, however, that the reason for his avoidance is similar to the reason for his aversion to religion and metaphysics. Politics requires the decisiveness, conviction, and action that the ironist cannot supply. Rorty cites admiringly a passage from Milan Kundera's reflections about the novel that apply to religion and ideology but could apply to politics as well:

> [Religions and ideologies] can cope with the novel only by translating its language of relativity and ambiguity into their own apodictic and dogmatic discourse. They require that someone be right: either Anna Karenina is the victim of a narrow-minded tyrant, or Karenina is the victim of an immoral woman; either Karenina is an innocent man crushed by an unjust court, or the court represents divine justice and Karenina is guilty.

The matter, as the deconstructionists say, is undecidable. In the public realm, one must decide.

If Rorty has anything to offer the public realm, it is the imperative not to be cruel, a command that applies, of course, to the private realm as well. That and the word "freedom," which he sets against the claim of truth. But even where cruelty is concerned, his anti-universalist, anti-metaphysical bias turns out to be an obstacle to thinking pragmatically about the hard questions of when and how to diminish cruelty. Questions about the nature of cruelty are metaphysical and therefore off limits. But they may have to be addressed if we are to exercise justice. In doing harm to a murderer or a predatory nation, are we being cruel? Is it possible to be cruel in order to be kind, as the poet says? Cruelty inflicts pain, but the infliction of pain is not necessarily cruel. The doctor who cauterizes a wound wants to heal, not cause, pain. The patient is made to suffer one kind of pain to prevent a worse kind. I am suggesting that Rorty's well-

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intentioned proscription against cruelty is vacuous, because it is accompanied by another proscription against pursuing the so-called metaphysical questions about justice and right action that would enable us to determine what constitutes cruelty. Given his restrictions, it is understandable why his liberalism would have nothing to offer the public realm. What is harder to understand is why he would want to impose such restrictions.

Rorty's anti-universalism is disabling because it is doctrinaire and therefore not adequately responsive to the realities of political and moral life. For instance, he contrasts himself with "the traditional, Platonic or Kantian philosopher," for whom "the possibility of grounding the European form of life – of showing it to be more than European, more than a contingent human project – seems the central task of philosophy. He wants to show that sinning against Socrates is sinning against our nature, not just against our community. So he sees the pragmatist as an irrationalist." The distinction between community and nature serves the *philosophical* argument that Rorty is making, but it is not *pragmatically* necessary. What if someone (it doesn't have to be a philosopher) interposed himself and said that to sin against Socrates is a sin against many, if not all communities? Would Rorty then resist the view that there may be a community that cuts across communities, because it smacks of universalism? Rorty complains about the irrelevance of philosophy to the problems of the world (he identifies the philosophical enterprise with the universalism of metaphysical discourse) and offers as an alternative the concrete knowledge and even wisdom of novelists and journalists. They have the advantage of observing the actual lives of people and the workings of society. Yet it is striking how often Rorty's arguments are animated by philosophical rather than pragmatic considerations.

According to Rorty, each community provides the ideals necessary for condemning and acting against cruelty. But such a view avoids the hard cases like internecine conflict between communities (the situation in the former Yugoslavia, for instance) or war between nations. In such conflicts, whose ideals should be followed? Is it always the case that a communal ideal will serve the cause against cruelty? Communities or societies based on the code of honor encourage rather than prevent cruelty. Rorty feels that he can afford to invoke the communal against the universalist ideal, because his Eurocentric community contains those universalist ideals that speak out against cruelty:

> . . . it is part of the tradition of our community that the human stranger from whom all dignity has been stripped is to be taken in, to be reclothed with dignity. This Jewish and Christian element in our

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> tradition is gratefully invoked by freeloading atheists like myself, who would like to let differences like that between the Kantian and the Hegelian remain "merely philosophical."

Rorty has betrayed himself by confessing to the pragmatic necessity of the "Jewish and Christian element," which derives its force from its universalist conception of human dignity. "Freeloading atheist" indeed: he wants the benefits of universalism without subscribing to its philosophical foundations. This allows him to have his cake and eat it, but it does not solve the problem of what should be done when communal ideas collide. On what basis, from a Rortyan perspective, can it be determined whether a communal idea is corrupt? Rorty leaves no room for passing authoritative judgment on the moral character of a community or society – even totalitarian and authoritarian societies. But then Rorty doesn't see the problem. In place of adjudication between rival views, he offers the consolation of interminable conversation. He admits that "we don't know how it would feel. We don't know whether, given such a change in tone, the conversation of Europe might not falter and die away." But the thought of the disappearance of the European conversation (an odd cosmopolitan locution for a particularist like Rorty) seems to stir no anxiety in him. His anti-universalist conception of solidarity has its roots not in liberalism, but in conservative thinking. It recalls Joseph de Maistre's assertion: "There is no such thing as *man* in the world. I have seen, during my life, Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, etc. But as far as *man* is concerned, I declare that I have never in my life met him; if he exists, he is unknown to me."

Does a liberalism aware of the epistemological difficulties of establishing grounds for objectivist claims need to take the peculiarly vulnerable form it assumes in Rorty's work? Leszek Kolakowski suggests another way. He insists on comparing and evaluating the differences between cultures and perspectives on *moral* grounds, because he knows that cultures (including his own) are capable of barbarism. He can then preach universal intolerance of barbaric acts, regardless of where they occur. In Kolakowski the challenge to universalism stops short of tolerance for barbarism, and he can assert with a moral confidence that does not require support from epistemology that "a culture capable of valu[ing] tolerance in public life" and "skepticism in . . . intellectual work" is superior to cultures that don't. Paradoxically, this entails intolerance of intolerance and an unwillingness to allow a radical skepticism to undermine the condition of openness. Kolakowski affirms an "inconsistent skepticism" and "an inconsistent universalism." He defends the liberal idea with vigor. In

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contrast, Rorty's liberalism is literally indefensible. (The hero in his liberal culture is the strong poet, who is not required to argue for his vision.) It seems not to be a matter of concern to Rorty that his liberalism is indefensible, perhaps, one might speculate, because of his remarkably complacent American feeling that it is essentially unthreatened and can take care of itself. A European like Kolakowski, knowing at first hand the reality of totalitarianism, could not possibly assume that liberal culture does not need to be defended.

The future, for Rorty, apparently holds no prospect of trouble. It allows him to conclude that it is a matter of indifference whatever people in a liberal society decide to call the truth. The following passage from *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* is notorious and often quoted by his critics:

> It is central to the idea of a liberal society that, in respect to words as opposed to force, anything goes. This openmindedness should not be fostered because as Scripture teaches, truth is great and will prevail, or because as Milton suggests, truth will always win in a free and open encounter. It should be fostered for its own sake. *A liberal society is one which is content to call "true" whatever the upshot of such encounters turns out to be.*

Rorty is right to dismiss the scriptural view that truth will always prevail, but it is nothing short of amazing that he is willing to accept as "true" whatever the reality might be. What if the outcome is barbarism, what are the resources in liberal culture for countering it? Perhaps Rorty believes that circumscribing "anything goes" to the realm of expression is sufficient protection against cruelty. But the very fact that he is not willing to give the unconditional license of "anything goes" to actors (as distinguished from worders) suggest that we *should not* be content to call true, "whatever the upshot turns out to be," especially if "truth" turns out to be the verbal representation of the noxious force that he wishes to proscribe.

Irony is a negative condition or attitude: it exists in a relation of doubt or quizzicality to some positive assertion "taken as final." A culture needs something more than irony to provide it with values and with the inner strength to resist barbarism. Rorty's account of our moral lives precludes not only any and all appeals to universal standards, it also refuses to give credence to the appeal to "something inside" in us:

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> Suppose that Socrates was wrong, that we have *not* once seen the truth, and so will not, intuitively, recognize it when we see it again. This means that when the secret police come, when the torturers violate the innocent, there is nothing to be said to them of the form "there is something within you which you are betraying. Though you embody the practices of a totalitarian society which will endure forever, there is something beyond those practices which condemns you. . . ." There is nothing deep down inside us except what we have indeed put there ourselves, no criterion that we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality that is not an appeal to such a criterion, no vigorous argumentation that is not obedience to our own conventions.

Rorty here exemplifies the agnostic intellectual, described by the philosopher and Holocaust survivor, Jean Amery, whose morally ungrounded rationalism could lead him to accept the "morality"of the torturers in the death camps:

> The intellectual . . . who after the collapse of his initial inner resistance had recognized that what may not be, very well could be, who experienced the logic of the SS as a reality that proved itself by the hour, now took a few fateful steps further in his thinking. Were not those who were preparing to destroy him in the right, owing to the undeniable fact that they were the stronger ones?

Rorty is so bent on producing an account of our moral lives that unsettles any and all appeals to general and universal standards that he is unwilling to give credence to the appeal to "something inside." He is content simply to assert that when we presume to speak from "something inside," it can only be something that we have put there ourselves. He doesn't even ask the question of why we should want to put it there. Our task as moral agents, however our agency has been constructed, should be the cultivation of the "something inside," which enables us to resist the torturer inside us and out. It is hardly enough to say that cruelty is the worst we can do. I do not mean to cast any aspersion on Rorty's personal humanity. His sentiments are nothing but humane. But as a pragmatist, Rorty seems oddly unconcerned about the consequences of his ideas.

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EDITH KURZWEIL

A Politically Correct Freud?

There is a sure-fire way these days for anyone to make a splash: 1) find a weak target and proclaim it a pillar of the establishment; 2) get a number of its foes and your friends to rally behind you; 3) with luck you may get them to sign a petition; 4) then go to your contacts in the press. This practice has become part of our *zeitgeist*.

The attacks are justified in the name of free speech, of furthering debate versus silence. But because the ensuing controversies take place in disparate domains of inquiry, and in substance are internal to specific fields, participants tend to overlook the fact that their disputes are part of a larger phenomenon, of the general atmosphere criticizing the idea of tradition, the accumulation of knowledge, the possibility of arriving at truth. To call these incidents "politically correct" has become clichéd. For the naming itself avoids analysis and no longer fully applies. Psychoanalysts, for instance, are perceived as traditionalists. Their opponents dismiss them as part of the establishment. The same happens to literary critics or historians who don't buy in, who don't share these preferences. Nor do they hold on to the 1960s radicalism that decreed that "the personal is the political," and who assumed that every scientific enterprise was to further human and political advances. In other words, individuals who have given up on revolutionary politics are hoping to make their dreams come true in the realm of culture – with the help of the press, and the law.

The current brouhaha surrounding the "temporarily" canceled Freud exhibit at the Library of Congress is only the most recent example of our current propensity to put down traditional knowledge. It was instigated by two Freud scholars renowned for their antagonism to psychoanalysts – by Peter Swales, who a number of years ago gained attention when claiming that Freud had had an illicit affair with his sister-in-law Minna Bernays, and by Frederick Crews, a professor of English whose articles in *The New York Review of Books* against psychoanalytic practice have attracted attention.

According to Crews, "the show was conceived as a means of mobilizing support for the besieged practice of psychoanalysis . . . and [the protesters asked] only for recognition that independent contemporary scholarship offers a radically different view of Freud from the one promoted by the psychoanalytic establishment." Not so. Only two of the eleven exhibition consultants belong to the so-called American establish-

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ment – Harold Blum, the director of the Sigmund Freud Archives, and Bernard Pacella, its secretary-treasurer. Among the others are five (American) historians; the president and director of the Sigmund Freud Society of Vienna; a German psychoanalyst and editor of Freud texts; and the research director of London's Freud Museum. The exhibit was slated to travel from Washington to Vienna and then to London.

The original idea and the seed money for this event came from Vienna, a fact that surfaced only after the show was postponed. Because Austrians are celebrating the country's millennium in 1996, they decided to honor Freud – the city's most famous among those the Nazis expelled in 1938 – on this occasion, and possibly to finally come to terms with the guilt for their shameful past. But precisely because of this cloudy past, the Austrians are careful not to interfere with the content of the exhibition. They had suggested using one of Freud's own titles, "Sigmund Freud: Civilization and Its Discontents." Still, they did not seem to object when the American organizers, already influenced by Swales's behests not only to refrain from praising Freud but also to belittle his insights, changed the name to "Sigmund Freud: Conflict and Culture." The Austrians did not catch on to the fact that in America "civilization" has come to be considered too traditional a term, and that replacing discontent with conflict might herald a distinct focus. Nor that opponents of psychoanalysis might insist on helping to select which of the forty-five thousand items in these archives ought to be displayed. They were in for a shock.

In a spirit of compromise, the consulting committee, whose members themselves do not see eye to eye on what letters or papers of Freud's might be most meaningful and instructive, decided to ask "younger scholars," often a pseudonym for detractors, to contribute to the catalogue. Under the circumstances, it seems, they did not want to include Peter Swales and Frederick Crews, but eventually agreed to have one of their pals, Patrick Mahoney, join their committee.

I found out about Swales's "interest" early in July 1995, when the curator, Michel Roth, asked me to write an essay for the catalogue – after another Freud basher, Mikkel Borch-Jacobson, had decided that he would not take part unless there were more of a balance between Freud lovers and Freud haters; and maybe because Inge Scholz-Strasser, the director of the Sigmund Freud-Gesellschaft in Vienna, indicated that she thought there ought to be at least one article on the link between Viennese and American Freudians. (I should add that I am a sociologist, an independent observer of the international Freudian scene, and thus a bit suspect by all "sides.") But I did tell Roth that so far as I knew, when a curator organizes a show of Picasso's achievements he does not aim for balance between either his contemporary or current critics, and selects

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items fitting the show's concept, space, and so on; and that those opposing the choices are free to disparage the exhibit once it is mounted. In the case of Freud, however, the detractors had gotten a jump start, and demanded to be represented within the show itself. Roth was hoodwinked by them, and played the game by attempting to placate them. He kept making one concession after another. Finally, as Swales stated to the press, Roth did not include enough negative matter in the proposed display to keep the opponents from organizing the virulent campaign that eventually led the officials at the Library of Congress to postpone the exhibit, at least for this year. (The latest report from the Congress indicates that the exhibit will appear sometime after June of 1998.)

Some Viennese friends have called me, surprised and appalled at what they perceive as American censorship on the one hand and philistinism on the other; others have said that under the circumstances the Austrian government ought to withdraw its support. But they all are averse to openly voice their dismay. Their government officials say that they never express a view on the content of whatever artistic and cultural endeavors they support. Our own representatives at the Library of Congress seem to be equally careful, officially basing the "delay" on not yet having raised sufficient financial backing.

The press has had a field day, and especially *The New York Times* has given multiple exposure to Crews who argued, for instance, that "the panic inherent in the anticipation of professional extinction is the dread of Freud's disciples these days." (Of course, psychoanalysis is under siege, and the assault comes from many quarters, but it is in no way connected to the proposed display of archives.)

The postponement of this exposition has been compared to last year's controversy surrounding the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian – as an example of the efficacy of public outrage. These organizers, in order to argue that President Truman should not have dropped the atomic bomb, had not counted on the fact that veterans who had been in the war, and citizens who remember the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the daily bombardments by the Japanese and the death of relatives, would object to the depiction of the Japanese as victims. Thus the grounds for the confrontation at the Smithsonian were the reverse: there, the "politically correct" rewriting of history had been blithely endorsed and then was questioned, whereas at the Library of Congress revisionist opponents went on the attack in order to have their own version of the past accepted.

As Jonathan Lear stated in *The New Republic*, an argument has been inflated into a movement. But what is the reason for the force of these assaults? Admittedly, Freudian psychoanalysts are not about to flood the

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academy, the market place, or any other public sphere. And Freud has been dead for over fifty-five years. Yet his ideas, with their many twists and turns, and the reformulations and changes he himself proposed, and which then and later were being introduced into and elaborated in many new disciplines, have been extraordinarily resilient. And endless free associations to them have fueled the debates about what by now is thought to be the science of psychoanalysis by some, and its art by others.

Some of the aspects the critics are exploiting are rooted in the peculiarly American history of the psychoanalytic movement, which goes back to the late 1920s. Then, American Freudians over Freud's strong objections and in contrast to the Europeans, insisted on restricting membership to medically trained individuals. (Ironically, in part they did so for fear of the charlatans who, in America, could not be legally kept from hanging out their shingles.) The resulting stratification excluded clinically trained psychologists from the most desirable jobs and from most funded research, as well as from working with psychiatrists. Ten years ago, they started a lawsuit, which they (mostly) won. Although they now are officially welcomed by the "establishment," many among them keep nursing their "scars." In England, Germany, Austria, and France, both physicians and clinical psychologists were being trained in the same institutes all along.

In the cultural domain, the informed public expected Freud's insights into the psyche, into literature, into society, and even into politics, to explore and explain the depths of the human mind. But because the psychoanalysts couldn't live up to these exalted expectations, the public, on the whole, was disappointed. Some patients felt forsaken by their own psychoanalysts. During that time, also, psychoanalysts were splitting up into theoretical factions, formed myriads of new associations and training institutes – hoping to discover a path that might, after all, unravel the deepest vagaries of our psyches. The unavoidable splits among them, which they did not hesitate to air, made them ever more vulnerable to criticism by outsiders. This Babel of psychoanalytic practices was compounded further by the more recent addition of Lacanian inspired literary studies, which hold that linguistically driven free association to written, verbal and cultural texts are the road to Freud's unconscious – the foundation of psychoanalysis. This approach ignored many advances in clinical techniques, and led to a shift of the center from psychoanalytic therapy to psychoanalytic language. And the professors of literature don't take into account that words alone don't cure neuroses.

A quick perusal of the petition's signatories indicates that most of them are Ph.D.s rather than M.D.s, and researchers or academics rather than practicing therapists. This not only makes most of them downplay the therapeutic elements but has attuned them to playing the political

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games that have become so prevalent in our universities. Swales and Crews are pros in that realm. And in their aim to either control or destroy the proposed exhibit, to administer the *coup de grace*, they could count on support from disgruntled psychologists and social workers.

In general, the Freudians are an easy target: they are politically naive. Because to them, politics refer to internal, disciplinary battles, they have been oblivious to the handwriting on the wall. They have equivocated and placated, and have psychoanalyzed their opponents – unaware that they were being assaulted by the zeitgeist. Also, because they have perfected Freud's technique with patients – of listening to them rather than talking in order to give their unconscious a chance to surface – they tend to transfer this habit when it comes to answering their critics. This has worked against them in the cultural sphere, and in relation to their postmodernist and deconstructionist foes. For neither silence nor accommodation will win the day. This is why, at least in part, the Freudians have been ill-equipped to answer Crews, Swales and their cosignatories, and why they allowed them to chip away at their project, and to end up destroying it.

"It's time to reinvent Freud," stated Richard Schweder, a professor of human development. In his short version of the enemies' list, again in *The New York Times*, he (correctly) includes sociobiologists and cognitive scientists; behavioral geneticists and academic psychologists; humanists and philosophers of science. Moreover, psychiatrists now are experimenting with newly available drug therapies. For them (and for insurance companies), it's the victory of Prozac over insight, for most of the others it's the ascendance of science over the belief in our ability to reach self-knowledge. But for feminists (and postmodernists) it's something different.

Gloria Steinem, one of the signatories, was quoted as stating that Freud, by suggesting that "biology is destiny, the idea that women were supposed to have only vaginal orgasms, his wholesale condemnation of masturbation . . . is the psychic equivalent of a cliterodectomy," the surgical removal of female genitals. I had assumed that she was conversant enough with Freud's rudimentary texts to know that he was not that stupid, and that in his entire oeuvre he had been tentative and searching for enlightenment – even while mistaken; that he lived in a patriarchal society but spent his life trying to overcome rather than support its assumptions. Sophie Freud, a retired professor of social work, another signer, who is renowned only as one of Freud's granddaughters, is quoted as saying that "some of my grandfather's ideas have become obsolete, . . . for instance, the drive theory that sexual and aggressive drives motivate all life." Yes. But the besieged American "establishment" has not accepted

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this theory for the last fifty years, although it has been attacked for this neglect by some of the German-speaking colleagues.

The exhibition these critics espouse, I believe, cannot enlighten viewers about Freud's genius or the civilization that nurtured it. Nor could it teach them some of the history they no longer get in school. But in the calm atmosphere of a thoughtful exhibit, rather than in a politically charged and contentious one, visitors might be exposed to the intellectual life that used to matter – when America was not yet dominated by cultural terrorists posing as defenders of free thought, by yellow journalists allegedly standing up for free expression, and by ill-informed opinion passing itself off as the wave of the future.

If, however, these cultural politics remain unchallenged, psychoanalysis will not be the only knowledge to go down the drain. For the search for the unconscious, with all its flaws and wrinkles, is based on honesty – a quality antithetical to politics, and to the culture it breeds.

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PASCAL BRUCKNER

The Edge of Babel

In his autobiography, *Conclusive Evidence,* Vladimir Nabokov recounts that when he was at Cambridge from 1919 to 1922, after the Bolshevik Revolution, he was surprised to unexpectedly come upon "a Russian work, a second-hand copy of *Dahl's Interpretative Dictionary of the Living Russian Language.* I bought it and resolved to read at least ten pages per day, jotting down such colorful words and expressions as might especially please me, and I kept this up for a considerable time. My fear of losing or corrupting, through alien influence, the only thing I had salvaged from Russia – her language – became positively morbid."

Today, such concern for his lost country, his small linguistic heritage, would earn Nabokov charges of "regressive identification" or "fastidious timidity" as our age, more than any other, values multiplicity and openness as extremely progressive traits. In fact, rumor has it that a titanic battle is being waged by two camps as allergic to each other as capitalism and communism are. On the one side is the nationalist and xenophobic camp, clinging to its heritage like Molière's Harpagon to his treasure chest; on the other, the cosmopolitan camp, starving for otherness, curious about everything, anxious to exchange constricting nationalism for a roomier garment. The former, barricaded within their Frenchness (or Germanness) are depicted as resentful, doddering, and provincial. The latter are said to exude the aura of open spaces, youth, and hope. On the one side, the ugly contractions of fear and stinginess; on the other, the beauty of friendship and audacity. These alternatives surely exist, but must we accept them in such a narrow, simplistic version? Are we really condemned either to remain imprisoned in our birthplaces or to immerse ourselves in the many-hued multitude of cultures? Must we respond to this commandment that appears to be an inescapable obligation?

Cosmopolitanism constitutes *a priori* an eminently desirable value for no other reason than the attacks it has suffered from Fascists and Stalinists. Cosmopolitanism was once the privilege of European aristocracy and the bourgeoisie's children, then the curse of minorities routed by the war, exterminated through persecution and the Holocaust. Now, according to its adherents, cosmopolitanism is becoming our common condition. A new man is being born: no longer the isolated man of former times, cloistered upon his patch of earth, he is both bound and mobile, the sum of all preceding wisdom, an individual without borders, as adaptable to

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many-tentacled megalopolises as to interplanetary travel, and thus armed against any regression to chauvinism. This multinational citizen, ideally above the fray and able to integrate a wide spectrum of perspectives, would eliminate the recourse to arms with his universal understanding. This proposition does not lack grandeur and recalls the most elevated principles of the eighteenth century. Humanity is but one family, temporarily divided by ignorance and absurd prejudices. If all are properly instructed, peace will reign. Furthermore, this all conforms to the preamble of the convention which created UNESCO on November 16, 1945. "Wars are created in man's spirit. It is in man's spirit that the defenses of peace must be forged."

Here we see the reconciliation of two formerly hostile families: the "third-worlder" left and the anti-authoritarian left. In the name of anti-colonialism, the "third-worlders" deny the West the right to elevate itself as the dominant culture. They recall the West to modesty, reminding it that its achievements are relative, and they force it to open itself up to those worlds it so unjustly oppressed. In the name of Europe and the end of East-West divisions, and in the name of the ecological solidarity that transcends all the continents, the anti-totalitarian left pleads for the dismantling of all barriers and for uniting all nations in a vast conglomerate. "In Europe today," writes Edgar Morin, for example, "the processes of dissociation and disintegration have joined in a race with those of association and integration." The attitude Morin adopts, again, is not a new one. It recalls the moralizing pacifism of certain Romantics. "Nation! A pompous word for saying barbarity," Lamartine had written as early as 1841. "Egoism and hatred have only one fatherland; fraternity has none. . . Every man is bred in the climate of his own intelligence; I am a citizen of any soul that thinks." All secession is, therefore, *a priori* negative because it disrupts the chain of events that is to bind all countries and prevent any risk of conflict. Furthermore, our century, unlike the preceding one, has experienced the horror of nationalism to the point of nausea. In short, after having been free because of nations, now we must be free in spite of them. "Be my brother, or I will kill you," said Rivarol in a variation on a formula in the spirit of the Terror. You must all be brothers, or you will be disqualified, proclaims the new doctrine of cosmopolitanism. Only those peoples anxious to join in a greater union would be worthy of humanity. The others, anxious to assert their uniqueness, to cut themselves off, would merit only the label of savages, of tribes. The future takes on the aspect of a terrible ultimatum: "Association or barbarity!" declares Morin. This very reasoning has enabled us to remain insensitive for so long to the suffering of the Croats and Bosnians in the Yugoslavian crisis. Of course, they were victims of aggression, but fundamentally, they were

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guilty of wanting to secede from the federation. (The Bosnians had the advantage of belonging to a multinational state.) By banishing them from the human race, we no longer had to feel compassion for their misery. We grouped the victims together with the henchmen.

One would like to applaud enthusiastically that common altruism that intends to overcome Eurocentric as well as local stereotypes and superstition through benevolence and instruction. Whatever sympathy or agreement it may inspire in us, it nonetheless seems problematic in more than one way, especially when it betrays, alters, or disfigures the original spirit of cosmopolitanism. First, taking up again an illusion appropriate to illumination, two realms are always confused in this kind of reflection: the ethical and the aesthetic. In the arts, where borrowing, plagiarism, and combinations form the source of creative richness, desirable syntheses occur that are impossible to translate into daily life. We cannot profit from another civilization's customs and habits without renouncing our own to a greater or lesser extent, unless we consider being cosmopolitan simply to mean eating couscous, tacos, fried rice, wearing Chinese silk, listening to Oriental music, or dying one's hair with henna. Yet certainly no single book, painting, or musical work carries in itself a particular moral imperative. The belief, for example, that the "spirit of the novel," in other words, "the playful subversion of dogma and orthodoxy," act as a critical conscience, unmooring us from our identifying impulses, depends on a very generous but unverifiable perspective. Even if the novel, as Milan Kundera well understood, is the democratic genre par excellence, one that presumes tolerance and conflicting points of view, there is no obligatory passage from the work to daily life. I can forget my prejudices while reading and enter the universe of a Chinese or South American author. I may feel myself on an equal footing with another era or other customs. Yet that will not alter my degree of open-mindedness once I abandon that literary space. Skeptical, ironic while reading, temporarily liberated from thousands of ties to my community, I become once again sectarian, partial, recaptured as soon as I return to my century and confront my peers. Works of art in themselves are profoundly amoral and are thus unable to eradicate humanity's barbaric foundation. In our naiveté, we believe that talent, intelligence, and sensitivity are inseparable from higher values, that they nourish and elevate us. But there is no link between genius, liberty, and justice. Obscurantist epochs have given rise to sublime works; tolerant epochs have proven arid. Even abject masterpieces (Sade, Céline) are nonetheless important inquiries into the human spirit.

Or, to express it more brutally still: we do not like the peoples of the Middle East simply because we read the Koran or "A Thousand and One

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Nights," just as reading Pushkin or Gogol has not brought us any closer to the Russians. We do not care for immigrants because we dance to Algerian raï music, any more than the young who dance to music with an African beat are freed from racist views concerning these same Africans when they meet in the street or must live with them. In addition, what we appreciate in Garcia Marquez or Tanizaki is not Colombia or Japan, but the particularities of a fate or a village able to elevate itself to the universal. What is a great novel? A bellringer's quarrel, an intimate adventure that grips the entire world. Worse still: the war in the former Yugoslavia has been prepared and is sustained by writers, novelists – Dobrica Cosic, the principal architect of Serbian nationalism, Milorad Pavic, Vuk Draskovic (who has since courageously joined the opposition) – and especially poets of whom the most famous, Radovan Karadjic, is a notorious war criminal. In present day Serbia, murderers versify, hatred is borne upon the wings of epic poetry, literature is put directly in the service of ethnic cleansing. We must abandon the idea that the cultural world with its successes and beauties can serve as a criterion or guide for the statesman or the moralist. Neither the most moving collection of poetry nor the sweetest music can offer any ethical truism, any gauge of just or unjust behavior. For a long time now, the true, the beautiful, and the good have parted ways.

There are things more serious still. We can ask if this indiscriminate eulogy of multiplicity does not conflate *cosmopolitanism* with *universalism*. Because of the "intertwining of all peoples in the web of the world market" (Karl Marx) because of the internationalization of merchandise and the media – which potentially brings all people into contact at all points on the globe – universalism is certainly the *vade mecum* of the new planetary world. It forms that universal sub-culture intended to replace all others, that mish-mash based on fast food, uniformity of clothing, television series, and muzak that claims to place all men under the same yoke, whether in Los Angeles, Caracas, Bombay, or Lagos! In this sense, Disneyworld and its miniature reconstructions of all the eras, mythologies, and cultures – albeit faded and toothless – is the epitome of universalism: a staging at once ridiculous and fantastic of universal brotherhood, of sweet human harmony. And even if world music is merely a pirating and recycling of all the rhythms of the planet geared towards consumption, it is in the midst of the theme park that Africa, Asia, Europe, the Wild West, the twentieth century and the future can coexist amicably under the banner of the new pidgin English, an impoverished language, a jargon for illiterate humanity. Yet universalism is nothing if not cosmopolitan. It can engulf, classify, and digest everything, because it destroys cultures by disemboweling and dismembering them, only to reconstitute them, em-

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balmed like mummies in their tombs, destroying both their singularity and their complexity. It is a vacuum that swallows rituals, folklore, and legends as if Hollywood or Disney were the culmination of all the histories on this planet. Several years ago, Ted Turner, the head of CNN, decided to eliminate the word "foreign" completely, substituting "international" instead. He had one economic and strategic goal: to prevent CNN from appearing too American and make it appear a reflection the world would see in its own mirror. But this choice is also symptomatic: like Chaplin's dictator, playing with the globe like a child with his ball, each spectator is invited to consider the world a single village in which all residents are as familiar to him as the neighbors in his apartment building. And yet, this denial of differences between peoples and continents is universalism's pitfall, a fear of totality, whereas cosmopolitanism is a thirst for plurality.

When Juan Goytisolo writes, "A culture is most alive when its openness towards and hunger for otherness is greatest," he is probably equating all civilizations because they are fundamentally all the same to him. Contrary to our belief that we are crossing boundaries and bringing hostile countries together in vast syntheses, we are actually just falling into an abyss as long as there is no pain of apprenticeship, no sense of estrangement. Proximity eliminates the other by creating the illusion that we have access to it. "Speed destroys color. When the gyroscope spins rapidly, everything turns gray," wrote Paul Morand in 1937.

Is not tourism universalism's saddest image, even if inevitable: the spectacle of those glutinous mobs milling around the Louvre, Versailles, the Acropolis, the pyramids, the Prado, all alike in their differences, a polyglot series of crowds, sharing the same polished boredom with works of art? We can certainly always dream of unifying humanity from the bottom up, confiscating possessions, erasing myths and fables, if that is the price of peace. In the name of harmony and security, we can wish to eradicate the aristocracy (and the danger) of great civilizations, pushing all men into the common mold of disenchantment, empoverishing but taming man, rendering him uniform at all latitudes of the globe. Yet this reduction to the lowest common denominator is not even certain. Traditions and beliefs that have been crushed or denied can resurface even more impetuously when they have been lost and reconstructed artificially as incoherent monsters and hybrids. (Several countries of Eastern Europe, forced into amnesia and atheism by a half-century of Communism, are a tragic example of this.) Furthermore, we know that Fascism, like Integrationism, in no way represents a mad love of traditions and sacred texts endangered by modernity, but represents instead their ideological falsification and, in a certain sense, their destruction. Hegel had already

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highlighted the Enlightment platitude of the critical spirit that rejects faith, religion, and superstition but ends by lamenting "the loss of its spiritual world." Modern universalism denies cultural differences in the name of the impoverished universal of entertainment and consumption. That is why it fails to reconcile men. The friendship it postulates is as tepid as it is superficial. Bringing McDonalds to Moscow or Teheran will never make ardent democrats of the Russians or the Iranians. Diversions alone will never eliminate Babel. There is always a dark side to Mickey Mouse's smile. [. . .]

True cosmopolitanism, in contrast to the stew of Babel, is rooted in the depths of several layers of memory, in numerous particularities. It does not indulge in flying over all the world's summits, its seas, and its elevations. It does not collect traits here and there. It becomes incarnate. Liberating oneself from one's roots, separating oneself from all one is near to join the foreign, does not mean floating freely like an atom, but means claiming additional possessions. It means counterbalancing the land of one's birth with additional homelands. That is why cosmopolitanism involves suffering. It is a trial that superior beings choose, finding joy and strength in overcoming habitual limits that seem absolutes common to all mortals. Consider Elias Canetti, a Sephardic Jew born in Bulgaria into a family which addressed its children in Spanish, who learned German, his parents' language, under his mother's harsh discipline. In teaching him, she found no hurdle too high and no humiliation too great, to her young son's initial despair and subsequent enchantment. "There was no question of abandoning other languages at the time. My mother believed that culture was the literatures of all the languages she knew. But German became the language of our love – and how exclusive it was!" Consider Nabokov and his account of the pain he experienced after 1940 when he adopted English as the language of his writing. "By changing my language, I did not renounce the language of Avvakum, Pushkin, and Tolstoy . . . in other words, I did not abandon a common language, but a vital and individual idiom. I had long been used to expressing myself as I wished and was not satisfied with the clichés of my adopted tongue. Thus the monstrous difficulties of this reincarnation and the horror of having to part with a living, docile being, initially plunged me into a state I need not describe. I will simply state that no writer of any stature experienced it before I did." As a more recent example, the Hungarian writer, Agota Kristof, living in Switzerland and writing in French, constantly mentions the very great difficulty she has in using that language. In short, one is not born cosmopolitan, but becomes so in an act of unlimited devotion and respect and by taking on an endless debt to a foreign reality. The elation of playing in several keys, on several keyboards requires the incorporation

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of another world's structure, a modest and thankless apprenticeship to a foreign culture with its formidable opaqueness. Knowledge ennobles only to the degree that the measures taken to acquire it were excessive. If all normal education is an act of violence on a child, destroying his innocence and all gentle comforts in order to establish him in the realm of the word, then a cosmopolitan education is destruction to the nth degree, a very dearly paid access to a superior liberty. Moving from one civilization to another is a mutation, a metamorphosis that requires work and suffering and has nothing to do with a jet's painless connecting of all points on the planet. That is why those without homelands constitute the nobility and antennae of the spirit; men of crossroads, straddling borders, they possess an acuity normal men lack. They perceive things that common men cannot see. As outsiders they possess greater insight and are more unsettled. They reveal the essential, disrupt certitudes, and disclose the secrets of closed societies. They have had the courage to leave behind the comfort of a single family, of a single place in search of beauty in other parts of the world. They are condemned to remain exceptions (but necessary exceptions: the disappearance of Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe, aside from Hungary, is a spiritual catastrophe without precedent). What is Vienna without Jews? A swollen head atop a tiny body, a museum-city without substance, a mausoleum lacking both spirit and taste. It is impossible, unthinkable to turn cosmopolitanism into a right similar to health or housing by democratizing it. Even if there are a thousand forms, a thousand degrees, a thousand nuances, it will always remain the exclusive realm of a small number.

Transplanting oneself to a foreign culture always entails discomfort because each people possesses its particular individuality, even if only through a language which is not immediately translatable into another, and because dark regions that cannot be illuminated exist between countries. (Consider simply the divisions between Catholic Europe and Protestant Europe.) Exoticism as well as racism will persist even into the most ideal future as they cannot be eliminated without destroying what creates them: the strangeness of the other. If each culture is an absolute unto itself, all cultures are not complementary but supplementary. They surpass and cover up each other like jungle vines. The universe is hostile because I do not know it all and allergies are born of diversity. War, incomprehension, suspicion are not first and foremost the fruits of man's wickedness, but come from witnessing the many expressions of being that cause fear and panic. Relations with the foreign are an indissoluble mix of attraction and repulsion. If uprootedness and the loss of domestic security were not a painful asceticism, migration would simply be a matter of traveling throughout the universe as blood circulates in our veins. In short,

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there will always be others: the division of races, languages, and beliefs will always prevent the fulfilling of the dream of perfect communication and understanding within humanity. Whatever my digestive capacity or the size of my heart, I will never overcome the distance to one who draws near, one who is neither as near nor as far as one might believe. Therefore, except for God or Sirius, there is no global perspective that can encompass all others, a superior position from which all essences of the North and the South, the East and the West, can be apprehended. We must abandon the Renaissance's cherished dream of universal man and settle for the more modest ideal of accomplished man, always partially realized, always unfinished.

In contrast to this planet-wide tourism that embraces everything but adopts nothing, cosmopolitanism presumes, as its first condition, a knowledge of one's own national culture. To approach others implies, then, the possession of a homeland and a memory that must be cultivated (even if they are made relative). I can only offer hospitality to a stranger if I have a certain ground to which I can welcome him. Those who claim to come from nowhere, dispensing with customs and legacies, are often content merely to reproduce their worst aspects and are but pawns. In order to liberate oneself from the past, one must first study it and enter into a discriminating relationship of acceptance and rejection. Yesterday, one's heritage was straightforward and self-evident; today it is at best a changing and equivocal injunction for which we must fumble in the dark. We cannot choose our roots, but, once we have assimilated them, we do choose to accept or reject these roots and to abandon some in order to adopt others. We use them as a ground from which we can launch ourselves elsewhere. What is individualism itself but *the traditional rejection of tradition,* and thus a history, a depth to plumb?

In general we understand cosmopolitanism in the extended, spatial sense of the term. Why not also consider it in a temporal sense as a conversation with the great dead, creating with them that ideal, mobile society that is the republic of the spirit? If it is true that we are never at home in the past and that previous centuries are foreign continents, it is important that we resuscitate our dead "who are perhaps still living," (Dostoevsky) in order to replenish ourselves through contact with them and to irrigate the mausoleum of culture with new blood. In this sense, reading, studying, and meditating upon the classics is a source of truth and authenticity in understanding other traditions. To paraphrase Malebranche, the relentless interrogation of the past is the piety of the moderns, because the past is no longer self-evident. Dialogue with the past liberates us from its weight and from the tyranny of the present, offering us beautiful escapes into spaces in which we can breathe freely.

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The obligation to persevere as oneself is as important as the obligation to openness. One is thus most susceptible to a cosmopolitanism that is embedded in one particular land and one particular language to serve as spring-boards towards others. Without a mother-tongue, a familiar landscape, or a tradition that "intertwines all that is transient" (Hegel) and that ties one to others, one can easily embrace any religion or custom in order to free oneself from all others, simply because no single one is essential (reducing oneself to a chameleon). A critical attachment to one's own nation must be celebrated, but it must not lack either an ability to examine or to love. One without the other would relegate us to exclusive preference or to useless blame. "If a Christian told me he wanted to convert to Hinduism because of his enthusiasm for the *Bhagavad Gita,* I would respond, 'The Bible has as much to offer as the Gita. But you have not really tried to discover it. Make this effort and be fully Christian.' " (Gandhi) Fitting oneself in the mould of another world, seeing oneself with the eyes of others, can also prove a detour in the return to the self. How many men, like Massignon, have been reconverted to Europe and the Christian faith after passing through Islamic lands? How many intermediaries between East and West have paid with a lifetime of work for immersing themselves into a foreign culture to the point of becoming sons of a double culture with all the accompanying risks and marvels? Ignorance of one's own history is the best way to remain ignorant of other histories. (In our time of amnesia and illiteracy, possessing even one cultural tradition seems an immense achievement to the majority.) How could a Frenchman, a German, an Englishman even begin to understand the currents within Islam or the metaphysical constructs of Asia if they are not familiar with their own religious heritage, whether or not they believe?

There is no need to be ashamed of one's rootedness, which is a means of liberation as well as a singularity, and a return to one's roots need not imply timidity, but could instead arise from reflection or a search for greater depth. Every border is not obsolete if it ensures the preservation of a people's integrity and cultural or linguistic treasures. Contrary to the widespread cliché, it was not a religious veneration of borders, but their very mutability that was the true tragedy for many populations, especially those of Eastern Europe, overrun and redrawn with each war and invasion. The great appeal of borders, once they are recognized and maintained, is that they can be crossed. Playing on their margins is more exciting than doing away with them altogether. Only conquerors dream of erasing borders, especially those of other countries! Against every Nabokov who chooses to write in English and in Russian, why not oppose a Roland Barthes who refused to learn any foreign language for fear

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that it would contaminate his work as a writer? Every life of the spirit is also cultivated upon the deliberate neglect of other spiritual possibilities. He who wishes to try everything, to raise himself up to universal heights, and chooses nothing so as not to sacrifice anything, condemns himself to distraction and ultimately to sterility. We must then reevaluate the difficulties, the blinders, the dissimulations, the many tricks with which a culture protects itself from a consuming indiscretion. Is not Europe's particular beauty a result of the way it has carved out on such small ground so many varied ways of life, all of them fragile and unique? Must we pronounce them outmoded and obsolete in the name of the universal? Must we disdain *a priori* the small legacies and solidarities and ridicule customs and local habits?

Aside from a few rare exceptions, traditional cultures were closed. There were no fissures or interstices through which doubt could penetrate. The outside always evoked a sense of menace, heresy, or evil. Each society was convinced that it embodied human excellence and rejected others as barbaric or animalistic. Such self-sufficiency is no longer possible. Humanity's sheer variety prevents us from living in the land of our birth as if it had been revealed the promised land once and for all. We have lost our national innocence and none of our traditions can claim to embody the unique and exclusive truth. Identity is always mobile and impure in a universe that is itself divided between several centers and not even the greatest power is complete or perfect. There is, to be sure, the silliness of small countries caught up in the "misery of their territorial disputes," (Istvan Bibo), their petty linguistic quarrels, their chauvinism, and their megalomania. It is also true that the abjectness of a particular ethnical nationalism, like that which rules today in Algeria and Serbia, need no longer be proven and that separatist viruses which crumble nations into micro-states are eminently problematic. It is possible that the nation-state is a transient reality and that post-national identities will compose humanity's face in the future.

At the moment, and especially for those of us in the West who operate in the gap between states that have lost their prerogatives and a political Europe that has not yet been realized, we still exercise our collective liberty through nations and consider ourselves their citizens. That is, we feel we share in their power. Nations are both indispensable and insurmountable because they not only transmit memory, favoring passions and fervor, but they also form the ideal framework in which a collective can influence its fate. We are never citizens of the world, but always of a particular nation that protects our rights and proscribes our obligations. There is nothing more ridiculous than the idea of a "terrestrial citizenship." (Compared to Martians, Moon-men, or the unlikely inhabitant of

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other galaxies?) It is on this very principle that Hannah Arendt had pushed for the existence of the State of Israel – a state in which all Jews could escape the status of refugees or exiles and finally enjoy the citizen's privilege of "the right to have rights." Such is the nation: that singular group through which one gains access to the universal, a contract between individuals within the context of a general spirit, itself inherited from common traditions. Suddenly diluting the nation in a greater environment will not lead to globalism, but will encourage local, regional, and tribal regression. (This gives rise to the dialectic between the satellite and the bell-tower that regulates our contact with the outside world, as the thirst for access to a global dimension is inseparable from the fear of disappearing into the immense.) And when nations decide to unite, as did the European Community, it is as sovereigns that they decide to resign all or part of their sovereignty. Until we find other forms of federal or confederate government, the best we can hope for in this realm – and this is the miracle of Franco-Germanic reconciliation since 1945 – are laws regulating the peaceful co-existence of states. We cannot expect different peoples to love or to meld passionately with one another. We cannot demand that communities actively participate in their own dissolution. Europeans, exhausted by their divisions and secular resentments, no longer detest one another, but they do not love one another either.

In the former Soviet Union, learning the Russian language was compulsory for all children, whether Polish, Czech, Armenian, or Turkistanian. This law was not considered an enriching one, but a violation of liberty. We must thus distinguish the *optional cosmopolitanism* of free countries from the *forced cosmopolitanism* of countries subjugated to an empire or a federation. Can we not agree that in certain cases, the separation of peoples through disputes is preferable to their forced unity and that an internationalism founded upon fictional friendship can give rise to the worst tension (thus accentuating the balkanization it was meant to prevent)? No matter how well-intentioned, the slogan, "association or barbarity" remains idealistic in principle and schematic in implementation. Beware of unions' fetishism for union's sake which has been the alibi of all invaders starving for new territory. Union is superior to division only in so far as its benefits outweigh the disadvantages of isolation. Nonetheless, alliance presupposes a democratic and overwhelming agreement of the parties in question, an equilibrium of force, prudent integration, and above all, the possibility of divorce, as in any adult marriage. A forced nuptial is worse than celibacy: numerous solitudes are better than imprisoned peoples. Europe does not lack the ability to "associate," but the spiritual strength and the will to tear the countries of Central and Eastern Europe away from their ethnical tropisms (reflex re-

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actions), their vengeful ruminations, and especially from the enviousness of their Russian older brother. Why have Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia abandoned "Serboslavia"? Not in order to turn inward, but to enter the Community, to breathe at last the air of larger spaces. And what did Europe do? It slammed the door in their faces in utter disdain for populations without strategic or economic interests. Idolatry of the many, of unification, of multinationalism is the screen behind which a less glorious reality is hidden. At the moment, Western Europe is nothing but an exclusive club of the wealthy, anxious to maintain order rather than achieve justice and who, in confirmation of the newly freed peoples' greatest fears, wish to return them to the bosom of Moscow or Serbia, replunging them into servitude, wanting them only to behave.

Preferable to the double dogmatism of openness and exclusion is a degree of porousness. Because the state of the world prevents any one society from permanently isolating itself, porousness would establish the proper balance between closemindedness and curiosity which engenders creative shocks and fascinating dissonances. The only way to avoid the double trap of chauvinistic pestilence and dissolution is perhaps through a kind of *paradoxical patriotism* – a patriotism that asks us not to renounce our country for the sake of our devotion to Europe, a patriotism that requires each of us both to cherish the best of the past and to consider the most interesting foreign achievements. It would be, finally, a patriotism of well-tempered modesty that could recognize the relative importance of each country without succumbing to humiliation or devaluation.

Instead of opposing a virginal and innocent Europe to ancient countries laden with crimes, we must consider them in a relation of tension, of unified opposition. Cosmopolitanism must counteract a narrow national sentiment without suppressing what the latter embodies in terms of indispensable local genius and values. Cosmopolitanism must be an antidote to the complacency of familiarity. Furthermore, the only good patriotism is a civilized one, that is, both accepted and limited. The only good cosmopolitanism is a grounded one that avoids dilettantism and the ease of eclecticism. Let us forgo extreme alternatives and facile reconciliations. Let us combine tradition with modernity, duration with transience, the nomadic life with sedentariness. Experiencing the marvel of several educations cannot occur without conflict, suffering, and painful choices. It is essential to argue for a fluid belonging, an uncertain identity. Identity is a tendency, not an immutable essence; too strenuous an attempt to define it, simply turns it into an obstacle that impedes with any desire to change. Identity is not an enclosure but a point of departure that enables the invention of a sequel to the past. In short, it is never fully formed like a ripe fruit that one need only pass from one generation to the next. It must be

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continuously constructed and reconstructed. There is no death of a nation, no death of collective memory. Unless it is to be the tomb of its own grandeur, a culture must also know how to liberate itself from its past, to break with, and even at times profane, its own customs. In order to renew itself a culture must hide within itself a composite heritage and be a battleground for a plurality of traditions to clash and to interact without destroying themselves. There is no loyalty to the self that does not include betrayal, no inconsistency that is not ultimately a superior degree of loyalty. (Similarly a language never belongs to simply one people. It can always be influenced by outer forces that will enrich as well as alter it.)

No matter how fluid or extroverted, our societies will always need the "great cosmopolitan souls" (Rousseau) of those migratory men who open up possibilities of conversation and even love between cultures, who reject egoism, and encourage exchange. Yet the *cosmopolitan spirit,* degraded into ideology appears merely as a diluted and vulgar *ersatz*. Desire alone does not effect cultural transformations. One needs determination, courage, and perhaps even the touch of madness all great mediators possess. In order to remain faithful to their memory, we must refuse to put forward makeshift goods. Let us not ape these great figures. Let us content ourselves with being democratic. In these times of resurging barbarity, that alone is not so bad.

Translated from the French by Tess Lewis

Harold Brodkey

1930-1996

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KAREN WILKIN

At the Galleries

A diverse group of engaging exhibitions, ranging from ancient reliefs to Baroque drawings to present-day paintings and photographs, was on view in and around New York City this winter, if you braved the mountains of snow, the lakes of slush, and the Arctic cold. Some of us persevered – which is more than you can say for the postmen. If you were willing to navigate the embankments of snow left by the plows and bundle up against the cold, there were rewards.

The Metropolitan Museum, for example, offered a couple of small exhibits that were models of exacting scholarship and equally notable for the aesthetic pleasure they afforded; twelve panels of the Telephos Frieze from the Great Altar at Pergamon, and a selection of Poussin's drawings from the Royal Collection at Windsor. The huge Pergamon Altar, with its astonishing band of marble reliefs, arguably the most spectacular monument to survive from the Hellenistic period, is usually installed in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. The Telephos reliefs, which dramatize the history of a mythical ancestor of the Attalid dynasty who built the altar – only a fraction of the monument's sculptural decoration, but a choice fraction – will be on view in New York through April 14 because the Metropolitan, along with the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, helped to support a recent cleaning and restoration project.

In Berlin, a full-sized reconstruction of the west side of the complex housing the altar proper, a lavish affair of colonnades, relief sculptures, and stairs, is surrounded by a reconstruction of the great frieze, and the effect, while impressive, is somewhat overwhelming. (The whole museum is overwhelming; it also houses several ancient city gates and temples, more or less whole, transported and reconstituted.) At the Met, the twelve panels were handsomely displayed, arranged to evoke their original setting and possible sequence, but amply spaced. Context was provided by related sculptural fragments and coins borrowed from other institutions, a spiffy new model of the Great Altar reflecting the latest theories about what it must have looked like, helpful contextual drawings that situated the exhibited fragments, and informative wall texts that not only clarified the convoluted history of the Attalids, but unravelled the complicated legend depicted, literally and metaphorically, and summed up the relevant current archaeological scholarship. Before the Berlin Wall came down, when the Pergamon Museum was in what was then East

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Dionysos. The Telephos Frieze block 31. Marble. 25 and 1/2 inches by 13 and 3/8 inches by 7 and 1/2 inches. From the collection of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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A Dance Before a Herm of Pan (c. 1622-23) by Nicolas Poussin. Slight graphite underdrawing, pen and brown ink, pale brown wash. 8 and 1/8 inches by 12 and 7/8 inches. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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Germany, I once overheard an official guide explain that the struggle between the gods and giants depicted in the frieze was a struggle between capitalists and oppressed workers; the Met's texts were a *great* improvement.

Yet what made the exhibition so rewarding was not the abundant, fascinating information provided, but the vigorous, energetic reliefs themselves. Part of their appeal was, of course, their fragmentary state. The contrast between the crisp, bold naturalism of the best preserved sections and the soft transitions of ruined passages was often dramatic and enriching; a single muscular arm, a leg, or a headless but sturdy torso emerging from barely legible surroundings could appear more expressive, to our eyes, than a complete figure, especially a complete figure carved with the rather flashy, hyper-accomplished illusionism of the Hellenistic period. The warm color and weathered surfaces of the ancient marble also added a good deal. But the real excitement came from the pervasive lively rhythm that flickers through the entire ensemble, pulsing against the implied geometry that underlies each panel. You became enthralled by the abstract relationships of parallel curves of floating drapery or the compressed arcs of straining arms. Not all of the panels, as they have come down to us, were equally satisfying, but in purely sculptural terms, the best were dazzling, able to speak eloquently, both spatially and in terms of narrative, across more than two thousand years.

The Met's elegant installation, which isolated coherent "phrases" of the Telephos story, no doubt distorted the intent of whoever carved the frieze in the first half of the second century B.C. Purists may object, but since the original edifice seems to have looked a lot like the Vittorio Emmanuele monument in Piazza Venezia that Romans disparage as "the typewriter," I'm not sure that was a bad thing.

One of the delights of the great Poussin retrospective seen in Paris in the fall of 1994 was a spectacular array of works on paper, from finished presentation drawings to intimate studies. *Poussin: Works on Paper*, organized jointly by the Royal Library at Windsor Castle and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and seen at the Metropolitan this winter was a glorious footnote to the retrospective: sixty-five first-rate drawings by the master, drawn from collections assembled by Poussin's friends and patrons in his lifetime and kept together ever since.

Like many of his contemporaries, Poussin used drawing not simply as a way of learning about the world or recording his perceptions, but as an essential part of the careful preparation of his intellectually and visually complex paintings. Some of the most absorbing – and often the freshest, most beautiful – drawings in the show allowed you to watch Poussin test ideas, explore alternative compositions, and examine the dramatic possi-

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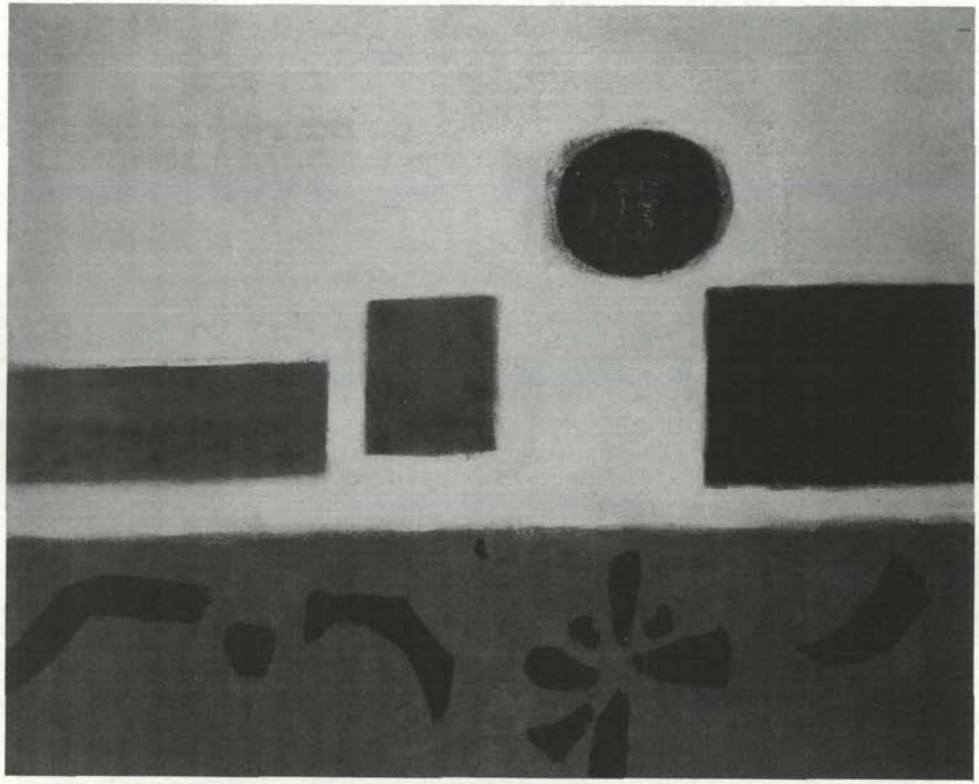

Black Sun (1956) by Adolph Gottlieb. Oil on canvas. 48 inches by 60 inches. Courtesy of Knoedler & Company.

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bilities of light and dark. The cumulative effect was not only to bring the seventeenth-century master vividly to life, but to make the evolution of some of his most subtle paintings visible.

As the exhibition made clear, Poussin had no single way of making a drawing. He could suggest a battle or stage an allegory with tellingly placed, calligraphic strokes or conjure up the essential masses of a packed city square or a pastoral landscape with broad passages of wash. Sometimes he did both at once. Whatever his method – muscular, evocative line or painterly strokes of tone – Poussin's drawings are at once seductive and impressive, as his paintings are, and revealing, as his paintings are not. In the drawings you admire his virtuosity at the same time that you can see, in some, the strategies he adopted to overcome an intermittent tremor of the hand. You acknowledge the severe, rational order imposed on the complexities of elaborate narratives, but at the same time, you are enchanted – as you never are in the cool, formal canvases – by the spontaneity with which the figures who enact these solemn dramas are described. The drawing show at the Met was modest, tightly focused, and magnificent, and it got even better with repeated visits. In addition, the Met provided a context for its British visitors by mounting a small exhibit of drawings from its own holdings of works on paper by Poussin's contemporaries and associates. All in all, a treat.

You could leap across the centuries, as well as the slush at the corners, if you went downtown from the Met to the exhibitions of Adolph Gottlieb's paintings from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s at Knoedler & Company and of works by a little-known near-contemporary of Gottlieb's, Steve Wheeler, at Snyder Fine Art. The two shows provoked interesting comparisons. The Gottliebs, variants on his signature *Bursts* and powerful *Imaginary Landscapes,* were striking for their generosity, their ample, assured gestures, and their subtle color. The Wheelers were noteworthy for their crowded, almost airless compositions, tight wrist drawing, and complex polychromy.

Among the stars of the Gottlieb show were two pictures from the 1950s: an elegant *Imaginary Landscape* dependent upon a marvelous dialogue between a rigid arc of geometric elements in the "sky" and a swoop of bold calligraphic fragments in the "earth" zone, and a brooding mineral green *Burst* variant, with a hovering blue oval turned into an ominous storm cloud by ferocious black drawing. *Excalibur #2*,1963 was a subtly-layered, pared-down stunner, with a haloed red disc pulsing against a pale ground and creamy overpainting that carved out lean, authoritative passages of over-scaled drawing below; a tough, lyrical picture, *Excalibur #2* reminded us once again of how brilliantly Gottlieb could orchestrate color, surface, and audaciously scaled marks to create ambiguous dramas.

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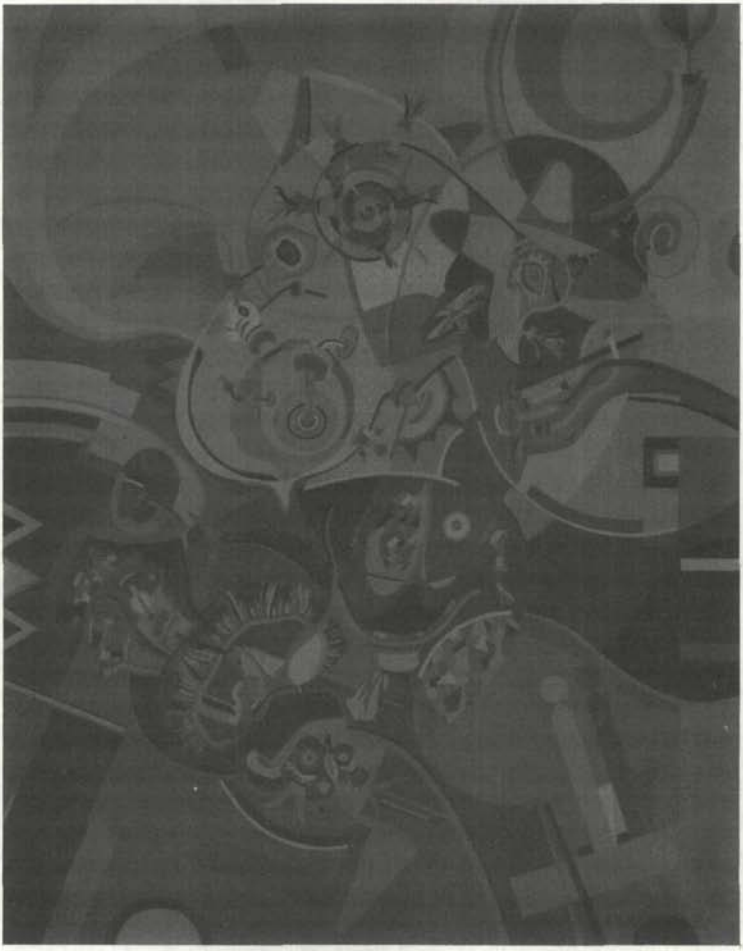

The Monarch Butterfly (c. 1949) by Steve Wheeler. Oil on canvas. 33 inches by 26 inches. Courtesy of Synder Fine Art.

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Wheeler, who was only nine years younger than Gottlieb but outlived him by seventeen, was a reclusive painter whose work, executed mostly in the 1940s, was virtually unknown at the time of his death in 1991. According to the exhibition catalogue, his last solo show in New York was in 1954, his last group participation in 1962. His pictures are modest in size, jazzily diverse in color, and packed, to the point of obsession, with tightly-bounded, interlocking images that clearly reflect his fascination with Native American sources. The cursive glyphs of Northwest Coast tribal art and the whiplash drawing style of South West pottery decoration, along with the elaborations of Mayan sculpture all resonate through Wheeler's imagery, enriched by a kind of Surrealist charge. These pictures have been hailed as exemplifying a diversity in American art of the forties that was obscured by the ascendency of Abstract Expressionism – see "Clement Greenberg, conspiracy theory" – but in fact, they seem very much of a piece, in content, if not strictly in form, with the work of such card-carrying Abstract Expressionists as Pollock and Gottlieb, from the same years. Like Wheeler and like many of their colleagues of the period, Pollock and Gottlieb suscribed to notions of the universality of both myth and the forms that embody myth in different cultures; like Wheeler, they were profoundly influenced by indigenous American art, with an admixture of Picasso and Surrealist theory. Wheeler's imagery and conception of space remains closer to their sources than Pollock's or Gottlieb's did, even in the 1940s, but their spirit is very similar.

It's not surprising, since Wheeler's formation was not unlike that of the better-known members of the New York School: a year at the Chicago Art Institute, the Art Students' League from 1932 to 1936, followed by Hans Hofmann's School until 1938. What sets Wheeler's work apart from even the most similarly motivated efforts of his colleagues, however, is a sense that the physical stuff of paint was a necessity to be pressed into the service of depiction, rather than an expressive element in its own right. Pollock's canvases of the early forties reveal an indebtedness to Native American imagery and a *horror vacuui* that keep pace with Wheeler's – no light comparison – but individual events in Pollock's paintings are always subsumed by a continuous expanse of tactile paint. In the same way, while Gottlieb's *Pictographs* of the forties depend, like Wheeler's pictures, on arrays of invented glyphs, informed by – among other things – tribal artifacts, sensuous layering of paint, excavation and overpainting play significant roles, creating a surface that is as expressive as the images themselves.

Wheeler is clearly a painter worth acknowledging, but I would suggest that he should be seen as one more exponent of a New York *zeitgeist*

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Edifice (1992) by Stephen Greene. Oil on linen. 43 inches by 48 inches. Courtesy of David Beitzel Gallery, New York.

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of the 1940s than as a wholly new voice. I am afraid that the answer to the catalogue's rhetorical question, "Is it possible that [Wheeler's work] can revise and add significantly to the way we look at the birth of post-war contemporary art?" (whatever "post-war contemporary" means, exactly) is "yes, but not much."

One of the strongest shows of the winter and an exhibition that *should* revise and add significantly to the way its author has been viewed, lately, was Stephen Greene's group of recent works at David Beitzel Gallery. At seventy-seven, Greene has a band of loyal admirers and a solid reputation both as a painter and a teacher that dates back about half a century: the phrase "painters' painter" is for once accurate. But in the past few years, some of us have noted with annoyance that Greene has more often been characterized (accurately, of course) as "Philip Guston's student and Frank Stella's teacher" than as a painter to be reckoned with for his own merits. The show at Beitzel, of paintings made over the past three or four years, should return the primary focus of attention to Greene the painter.

His recent works revealed his undiminished ability to create an utterly convincing, mysterious universe at once achingly beautiful and deeply disturbing. Greene is a master of expressive paint handling who can play rough scumbles against delicate washes and scratchings, or spread dense layers of pigment as though concealing things too intimate to be revealed. He is a master, too, of brooding hues, at once ravishing and abrasive. Recognizable and sometimes not so recognizable fragmentary images – the body parts, skulls, crutches, flowers, and the like that have haunted Greene's pictures for decades – emerge at intervals from pools of these colors and then subside. This sounds like late Surrealism, both misleading and a disservice to Greene's paintings – which is not to say that the pictures don't depend, ultimately, upon pure intuition and the guiding hand of the unconscious. But if you are looking for an analogy for Greene, think Gorky, rather than – say – Matta. Or better still, think Greene. His strange, lyrical, edgy pictures more than stand on their own; they are cranky, lush, seductive, irritating, and hard to forget.

The same adjectives could apply to the best works in Sandi Slone's survey show at the Jersey City Museum (see "braving the weather to see an exhibition"). As has been true of Slone's work over the twenty-odd years that she has been exhibiting, they were distinguished by their simultaneous fragility and toughness, their delicacy and rudeness. Color and touch can be tender, almost pastoral, but Stone reasserts her urban street-smarts and reminds us of the willfulness of picture-making by imposing an assortment of materials ranging from bone to plastic jewelry on her expanses of delicate hues, using them, however, simply as another way to

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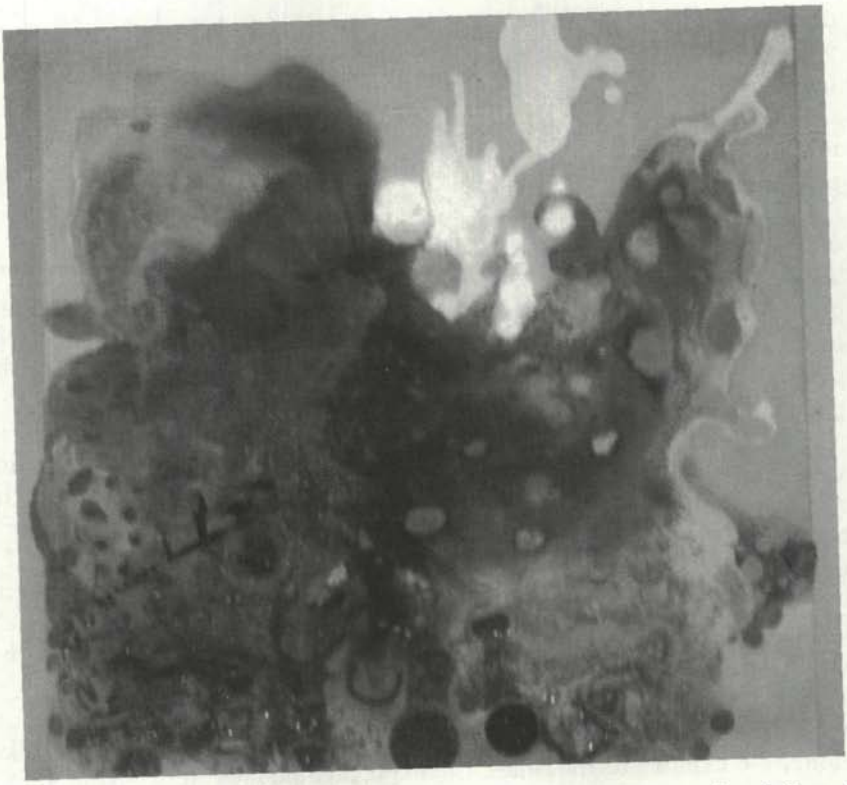

Skin Mirage (1995) by Sandi Slone. Gesso, acrylic, plastic beads, rocks, shells, collage on canvas.

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draw or to punctuate. Paint application itself is similarly varied, so that the whole surface is really a kind of "collage" of puddles, crackles, suave stains, and inclusions. Gradually, we discover that some of the most apparently ethereal passages are, in fact, the dried paint skins from the bottom of a bucket, that a delicate drawing element is really a transferred photograph blurred by xeroxing and all sorts of other manipulations, of the artist herself, as a child, drawing on the beach. It's risky, but when it works, Slone achieves an enriching ambiguity, a shift from literal materiality to the purely visual and back again, from a language of abstract gestures to explicit reference that parallels the shifts in scale provoked by our recognizing the figure in the photo and then losing it again in the painted and collaged whole. The skin of paint begins to function as a metaphor not only for the body but, by extension, for the artist herself.

The installation in Jersey City also included a group of earlier canvases that address "big" political themes, including the Holocaust, by deploying instantly recognizable photo images as emotional triggers, embedded in Slone's characteristic marks and pools. As good a painter as she is, none of these painterly incidents resonate the way the iconic associative images do, and the result trivializes both the image and Slone's (probably excellent) intentions. Happily, the newest paintings in the show were the most personal and the strongest.

Michèle Drouin's exhibition at 55 Mercer was her New York debut, although she has a considerable reputation in her native Québec. Like Slone, she exploits to the fullest the expressive possibilities of paint application, constructing her lucid, stormy pictures out of broad, assured strokes and swipes. Expression is wholly bound up with making. A firm architecture of wide vertical and horizontal "bands" usually frames the dramatic core of each canvas, a zone where notions of flatness and orderly alignment break down under the pressure of Drouin's repeated "attacks." Floating sweeps of pigment, now opaque, now transparent, cluster in layers or jostle like a chorus line or stretch to escape the confines of their delineated areas. If her compositions suggest the built environment, Drouin's palette, which ranges from smokey, nocturnal darks to radiant brights and pales, seems rooted in nature. In her best works, this apparent contradiction creates an enlivening tension, a momentary coexistence of the rational and the romantic that keeps you deeply engaged. Despite a long tradition of ambitious abstract painting in Canada, "official" Canadian contemporary art, to judge by what one sees in Toronto and Montreal museums and travelling exhibits these days, tends to be fashionably conceptual. Drouin's show, in addition to its own virtues, is proof that the tradition of hard-hitting expressionist abstraction, originated in

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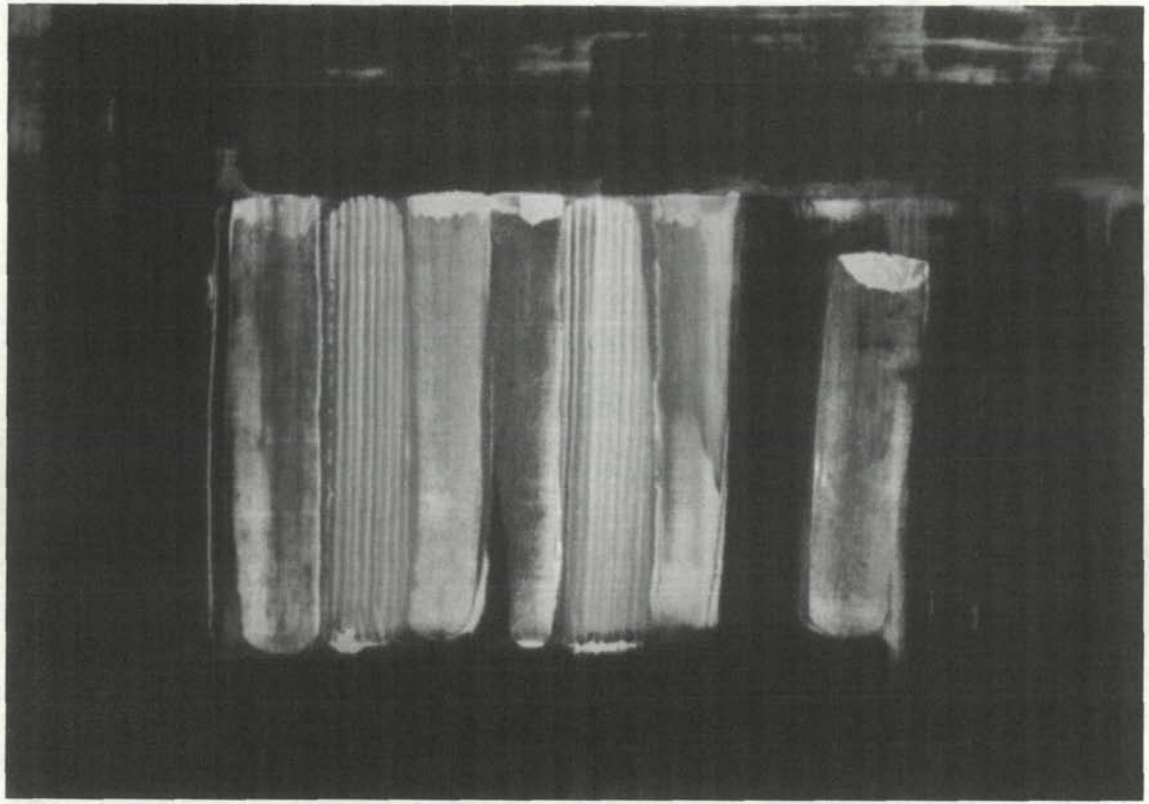

Urban Grit (1995) by Michèle Drouin. Acrylic on canvas. 42 inches by 60 inches. Courtesy of Michèle Drouin.

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Montreal in the 1940s by the painters known as *Les Automatistes,* is still flourishing.

A profound awareness of the pleasures of the city, even its least ingratiating aspects, was at the heart of the mini-retrospective of Rudy Burckhardt's photographs at Tibor de Nagy. Just as in his marvelous films of people moving through urban places, Burckhardt's exacting eye often focuses on things most of us see only peripherally or take for granted because of their familiarity – a battered stretch of sidewalk near the 42nd Street Library, a view of Manhattan from Brooklyn or Queens, an expanse of ordinary rooftops – and forces us to pay attention. Other images, of more "picturesque" subjects – the Flatiron Building, the bridges across the East River, a Venetian campo – are transformed by unexpected viewpoints, by momentary effects of light, or by being relegated to the status of background while Burckhardt concentrates on something else. An elegantly posed black cat, for example, dominates an entrancing image of Venice, transforming the familiar architecture into a kind of stage-set, at the same time that the low viewpoint turns the patterned pavement into a summary of Renaissance renderings of space. Burckhardt's vision seems utterly instinctive, effortless, and right; the subtlety and delicate orchestration of tones in his photographs, of course, belie this apparent artlessness. The show, which covered most of Burckhardt's career, also included telling portraits of artists, family, and friends, and a few landscape studies. The portraits usually held their own with the superb city images, but the landscapes were less convincing. Burckhardt seems to be at his best as a passionate observer of urban life, especially as a connoisseur of the subtle tonal gradations, the gritty textures, and the surprising juxtapositions that he reveals to us as essential characteristics of his adopted home, New York.

What else? A show of inventive, personal stone sculptures by Jon Isherwood, at Grimaldis Gallery in Baltimore. Isherwood, a young English sculptor who has lived in the U.S. for more than a decade, has been working in stone for about three years, after producing a serious body of work in steel and concrete that was accomplished, original, and signalled his discontent with the "tradition" of construction in steel in which he was trained. Stone allows – or compels – Isherwood to explore fully issues of mass and volume implicit in his steel and concrete works, as well as new kinds of surfaces. When he succeeds best, his stone pieces, which are usually intimate in size – the sculptures at Grimaldis averaged about one meter in any direction – seem monumental, but human in scale. They are fairly opaque, their closed faces sometimes rough, sometimes worked, but generally impenetrable – except where a slot, a "secret passage," like the entrance to an Egyptian tomb, allows us to realize that the cores of the

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Balzac (1995-96) by Jon Isherwood. Fox Hill Granite. 69 inches by 18 inches by 14 inches. Courtesy of C. Grimaldis Gallery.

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massive blocks have been emptied out. The enveloping stone becomes a wall-cum-skin-cum-mantle, in an emphasis on exteriorness that is heightened by Isherwood's quasi-painterly exploration of variations in inflection and texture. These surface changes result in variations of edges, hence of drawing, and of color. Sometimes, the interiors of the blocks are flooded with light, so that a suggestion of an infinitely desirable, intangible, illuminated, but hidden space invites us to move mentally through the narrow passage into the (usually unseen) hollow center of the sculpture. Scale shifts; the minimally inflected blocks initially seem to allude to architecture, but some also seem to refer to the body, particularly the female body. A sculpture with a suggestive curved aperture beneath a rough-hewn vertical slot seemed at once temple and torso, with a nod at Brancusi's *Kiss*. The contradiction between the obvious weight and bulk of the stone, which still retains vivid evidence of the original, unworked block, and our hard-won knowledge of the internal void makes Isherwood's best works extremely provocative. He is a young artist to watch with interest.

The most overrated show of the season was probably Ellen Gallagher's at Mary Boone. The paintings paid homage to Agnes Martin with their elegant, pale expanses and blocks of meticulous, repetitive drawing. When you looked closely, the obsessive marks resolved themselves as a vaguely tribal patterning interrupted by a sort of bead motif, rather than the gridding you would find in a Martin, but the general effect was stylish, cool, and essentially derivative. Yet, we were told, those minuscule ovoids and geometric dashes were actually references to African-American experience, shamanism, racial oppression, and all the rest of it, and according to at least one reviewer, this gave Gallagher's otherwise unremarkable, albeit handsome, tasteful pictures cosmic importance. Could anyone who actually saw the show really believe this?

Meyer Schapiro

An Early Friend and Contributor

1904-1996

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A View from Brooklyn I (1954) by Rudy Burckhardt. Gelatin-silver print. 11 inches by 14 inches. Courtesy of Tibor de Nagy Gallery.

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PÉTER ESTERHÁZY

The Problem Facing the Writer Today

The non-existent problem

A writer who is engaged in writing about the problems of a writer is either 1.)not a writer; 2.)not writing about problems; or 3.)does not have any problems to write about right now. A writer who is distressed by the problems of a writer right now is, I might add, not a writer, at least not now. A writer who is not writing is not a writer.

Stalin's teaching

"You got a man, you got yourself a problem; you haven't got a man, you haven't got yourself a problem," the illustrious teacher of the Masses is supposed to have said. Now, then, the writer is a man.

The problem of the problem

According to the Hungarian Etymological Dictionary, a problem is 1.)a practical or theoretical question proposed for a solution; 2.)a question that is difficult to solve, a question that is perplexing. In short, a problem is something in need of a solution. We would like to know where the shoe pinches, where the crux of the problem lies hidden. That is to say, we begin by assuming that there is a shoe, and that there is a crux.

We see the world as a set of problems. The European mind is set on problem-solving. It wants to eliminate the cause of the problem, its root, whereas "problems" are part and parcel of things. War, Auschwitz, or Sarajevo, these are not problems insofar as they cannot be solved; there is nothing to eliminate, unless the human being, of course. However, that is problematic.

The problem of the writer

The writer's problem is writing. Words, sentences. There is nothing to solve here. The writer is the man for whom language is a problem. This is the necessary (if not sufficient) condition for being a writer. This is the writer's real problem. He has no other. Which is as much as I wish to say on the subject.

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Today

The 'today' of the title means that there is also a yesterday, i.e. there is *time;* let us pay attention to time. And if we pay attention to time, we must pay attention to *space.* This much, at least, we should understand of the physics of 'today'.

The old problem

To say that the old problem was that we lacked freedom would be precipitate. For one thing, someone could counter saying that he personally was free; nor would it make our approach any more accurate if we tried to pinpoint the problem in the lack of freedom of our respective countries. The relationship of art and freedom is inordinately complex. It is a messy sort of relationship. Put fair and square, it is impossible to say what benefits art, what makes it bloom. Sometimes a bit of harassing will do the trick, sometimes a bit of caressing (which, however, does not legitimize the harassing), and sometimes when it is completely ignored.

1913

Be it as it may, living in a dictatorship is a dangerous business, more dangerous than living in a non-dictatorship. The margin of error is greater. For instance, if someone in Paris should happen to say that capitalism will last forever, he is not running an appreciable risk. But if someone happened to think (as indeed everyone did think) that this *thing,* even if it was not going to last forever, was lasting an inconceivably long time, and built his strategy for life on this conviction, then it is not inconceivable that right now he's in a bit of a pickle whenever he looks in a mirror, and if it's not the feeling of shame that catches up with him, then it's the uncomfortable feeling of awkwardness and embarrassment. To resort to an old metaphor, in 1913 we lived knowing that the Monarchy would last forever.

Clarification

From a distance, one might have thought that a soft-core dictatorship is not a dictatorship. It is more like democracy, except its degree of freedom is not one hundred or ninety-nine, but more like forty-three. One of these days, of course, it would reach fifty-one. This is a blunder. A soft-core dictatorship is still a dictatorship, its degree of freedom is zero; it has no freedom, all it has is scope for action. (Which is something, of course, since in any self-respecting dictatorship you have buttoning up, not scope for action. Freedoms instead of freedom.

Remembering is the most steadfast enemy of dictatorship. A real dictatorship clamps down mercilessly on remembering, freezing everything

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into an infinity of ice. The soft variant is no longer capable of this. It merely strains every muscle with unforseeable (!) vehemence. It can prevent us from speaking authentically about the real, but it can no longer prevent us from keeping silent about it authentically. Literature was, to use a lofty expression, the bulwark of this silence. Literature made a point of not speaking (sometimes not speaking with great precision) precisely *about that.*

The problem of the lofty

A bulwark is a serious thing. It's no child's play. In my opinion, and in contradiction to its own nature, it makes literature into something big and consequential. As we used to say, literature could be and was the only "place" to remind us of our lost (pilfered, squandered) freedom. Let's not beat about the bush. It really was of consequence; it could be of consequence; it had to be of consequence.

This brought with it the attendant danger that if a writer was not properly circumspect, he ended up confusing the importance of literature with his own. By degrees he came to believe that he too was important. And once a writer believes in his own importance, you can kiss him good-bye. This delusion of grandeur is worth bringing up because at times even good writers would fall into the trap.

It wasn't as easy as it looked. We had to accept, even guarantee, our own lack of seriousness while looking the seriousness and brutal grimness of the region (our space), unflinchingly in the eye. We had to confront the problem of what could be done with the bearable weightiness of being in the shadow of the timeless threat of the unbearable lightness of being.

Furthermore, once this thing was cleared up, theoretically at least, there was still more than enough confusion to go around. For instance, in the early and mid-seventies the tentative new goings on in prose stressed the primacy of the text over its setting, of text over context. But now and again, the books conceived in the new spirit would also satisfy the above-mentioned moral criteria, which is not meant to be a piece of self-criticism or nostalgia, of course. (As we are fond of saying, our books became *historical* books; as we are fond of saying, a portion of the East-European novel is dead, nor is there a single book that is not grieving over a dead sentence, the type that owed its existence not to itself or to other sentences, but for instance to the prohibition relating to it, but too late in coming. Still, it seems to me that [by definition?] books written with a concern for language have more life to them. They change, of course, because we read them differently. The pathos of courage has lost its luster. But something that this same pathos concealed has remained,

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something that only language, or to use our pet words, the subject and predicate, is capable of keeping alive.)

The problem of courage (the woman-problem)

The language of hard-core dictatorship is silence. That of soft-core dictatorship is keeping mum. Mumbling and muttering. Oblique reference and insinuation. Complicity and a clandestine mode of speech. Our basic example is the fifty-six guinea pigs. If in a text fifty-six guinea pigs flew (flitted, fluttered) over our garden, the reader was justified in perking up his cute little ears; fifty-six is a mythical number, a hidden point of reference signifying that something was happening then and there in favor of our poor, lost liberty or, as we were fond of saying, nothing was happening, but that much could be insinuated. This is what will be insinuated. We are encroaching on forbidden ground.

Furthermore, in the meantime we forgot all about the woman down in the garden, though Chekhov has taught us that if there is a garden, there is bound to be a woman in the garden, and needless to say, this is the only thing of any real interest. The woman. What about the woman? Good novels (the novels of the Kádár Era? Is this attribution justified?) have always been about this woman. But more's the pity, at times we were more interested in those fifty-six guinea pigs, may the pox take them.

This carried within it the attendant danger that literature and art would be judged not as literature and art, but as a moral exercise. The various considerations formed a confused jumble, and it was difficult not to get involved. Let me remind you of the dilemma of a "good" man writing a "bad" book. Who would have dared sell a work on a straw mat along with the old *Népszabadág,* the official party daily which, naturally, had other considerations; there was excitement not because the book was "bad," but because the author was "good." Or whatever. This is a highly delicate situation. What's good and bad in art springs from an intricate common consensus with no fail-safe parameters like you'd find in the mass production of pancakes. Accordingly, if extraneous viewpoints find their way into this common consensus – lies, to be perfectly frank – it bodes no good. At the very least, it is difficult, laborious, and complicated to put it right. Which in turn brings up the eternal problems of values and value systems. (Some people would like to dispatch the problem quickly and easily, and with great purificatory fury, by replacing the intelligentsia down to the last man. It's not a bad idea. There is something to be said for it, concretely, that it is ridiculous, because *in that case* they would have to get rid of everyone, including the guy doing the ridding . . .)

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The lack of problematics of the problem

This batch of real problems bore just one fruit, and even that did not affect art directly, only its situation. The situation of art, its point of view, its place in society, even the role it was expected to play, its business, was unequivocal. The writer had to take a heroic stand in the face of the government, hand in hand with the reader, of course, who in turn showered the writer with love, at times even with misguided respect.

The problem of lying

We have said above that in a dictatorship there is no time. It is still, frozen. Let us now contradict our metaphor, because, let's face it, time did pass, one way or another. (Or if it didn't, it dragged itself along, or went round and round the *present*.) In the meantime, coded speech became less and less a matter of course, and the complicity too seemed increasingly dubious: who or what are we hiding from when everybody knows everything, the censors understand the oblique references better than the readers; besides, you can't tell any more what refers to what. The secret is so blatantly out in the open that it is shameful.

In short, silence, the invigorating, at times surrealistically lovely and exclusive (!) chance for not speaking about *it,* turned into the voluntary suppression of speech, while the resplendent and often-sung hide-and-seek of semblance and reality became an obscene shifting in place. And as we know, it's an outhouse the suppression of speech belongs in, not a bulwark. A soft-core dictatorship makes men insatiable. They start asking questions as if, as far as society is concerned, it was all right. Naturally, they cannot ask these questions openly. But once they have asked them *inside,* of themselves, what they had before will no longer satisfy them. We have grown sick and tired of the answers of the sixties and seventies which led to the creation of the East European grotesque.

If everything was a lie, and we saw plainly enough that everything was a lie, it was not the grotesque fantasticality of it that startled us. After all, it really is spectacular when everything is a lie down to the last nail, from our father's eyebrow to our *gulyás* soup, as we are fond of saying. Rather, it was the awkward question, Where do we fit into all this? In a world of wholesale lies, are we not liars ourselves? Can a word, a sentence, a book be true in and of itself? If the reader is dishonest, what would make the writer honest? We had our suspicions all along that behind our courage there lurked a quantity of fear. But in the lukewarm world which permitted us to go to the West once a year, etc., etc.(!), how could anything else have existed besides fear, hidden, dismissed from one's thoughts?

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We have no satisfactory answers to these questions; indeed, it was the attendant resignation hand in hand with the excitement over the new opportunities that made us capable not only of pushing against, but of crashing right through the former barriers, and this is what finally ended the whole thing.

The new problem

No one knows for certain what it is that has begun. Generally, no one knows anything, East or West. Europe was a communal shrug of the shoulder, this is our new unity. Otherwise, East and West continue separate. It became apparent soon enough that such unification does not happen overnight. Furthermore, not only is there an East and a West (though metaphorically it is more like North and South), there is also something that is *central,* this neither here nor there (actually, more like there, but with a hopeful eye to *here,* or vice versa), even if the definitions are different. Possibly there are no definitions, even, only feeling and looking. I feel Eastern; he looks like Karl Marx Stadt. (Or whatever it's called now.)

But easy. Take it easy.

An inventory of problems

The problem of money. Until recently, we were not familiar with the power and sway of the almighty forint, and now we are experiencing a rude awakening. We have not yet elaborated our small spheres and structures of defense. The old forms of official state support for the arts are gone. The new are just being formulated. Generally, the old structures are collapsing, while the new are nowhere in sight. Easy come, easy go.

The problem of publishing. Instead of the discrete euphoria of liberty, we now often have the liberty of the worthless. The altered book shops. The altered books. (Liberated Europe, around these parts, is not familiar with the hard-bound book, only the paperback. As far as our children are concerned, a book is something that falls apart when you open it.)

The problem of print runs. The loss of prestige, as I see it, is not the problem. Having lost its political weight, literature is back in its place. Evidently, some writers find it difficult to adjust. But that's not the problem. To have a print run of five thousand instead of thirty thousand is a problem only for the sociology of reading, and a financial problem, too. But three hundred instead of three thousand, now that is entirely different. It provokes certain questions: What is art for? What is its place? (Where should we force room for it through some narrow crack between McDonald's and Sarajevo?) For whom are we waiting? These were never friendly questions, but the shadow of dictatorship, which was a question

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and an answer (and metaphorical confusion) all in one, took away their edge.

The problem of writing this essay

At this point I am momentarily stuck, something I must point out in my helplessness, because increasingly I will be talking about uncertainty, while this article speaks as if it *knew* something, grading and sorting problems and the like. This is the internal problem of the article. Its problahblah. If it were consistent, it would keep silent. But an article is incapable of this. (Only a poem can keep silent – sometimes).

The problem of forgetting to forget

They have taken the lid off of us, it is gone, somehow, and we can now boil over to our heart's delight. If we knew whom we were facing, though, if we had a sense of self and not only a sense of place, it would be easier. Persons of uncertain status are handling words of uncertain status. To quote: "The language that a Hungarian, possibly any Central-European, uses will remain foreign and strange even after translation. Askew. The system of reference for the ideas are different, while the use of words is neither leftist, nor liberal, not '68-ish, but god knows. Perhaps we could call it lyrical. In short, the use of words is mostly either inspired or uninspired, but it is always highly personal. Flowery speech instead of facts, metaphors instead of analysis. Furthermore, the personal language we speak is the product of the past forty years, when we didn't even know who we were as persons. Because, oh cruel life!, not only did the fiendish Soviet powers turn increasingly moronic, but so did the people, which means me, too. (*Nota bene:* Post-Yalta Europe itself became increasingly moronic. From Lisbon to Stockholm, from Bucharest to London, this continent was a place of blatant madness.)"

The new mutual agreements are biding their time. This is a dramatic process, sometimes with dramatic personal consequences. For the writer it is the time of relearning words, of probing, nice and slow and cautious, what words mean *now*.

The global, clear-cut, and therefore triumphant conflict between authority and art has been replaced by countless minor conflicts. The Iron Curtain has melted into thin air, while new national frontiers have been raised with the plaster of centuries-old, raging tempers. An old voice has appeared, one we had only to read about before, the voice of provincialism, something we did not have to take seriously until now. It was more than enough for the political system to take us seriously.

Around this part of the world, too much responsibility was meted out too quickly, and though we were anxious to have this responsibility, this

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freedom, and we thought we knew what we must do, now that it is time, we're perplexed about the what and the how of it. It's all we can do to look one step ahead, and even that only in the best of cases.

The real problem

For want of anything better, we would like to follow Western models, but without having faith in them. Of course, this approach may be too inflexible, and possibly it is this copying of Western models (which cannot be copied) that will open new prospects, making us stir, here and there, out of our present predicament, this emptiness, and we will ask different questions after all, or else questions to which, who knows, there might even be an answer. We haven't got the answers now, which means that we haven't even got real questions. We're being swept along, not knowing what to do with our cultural heritage, our imperatives.

We have experienced the drawbacks of looking ahead in the manner of old harvest-time posters, with a cloudy gaze in our eyes. Given the choice, it is still wiser to look just one step ahead, down at our feet. Except, we've been told that to be European means to raise your head. What is this new European like? What will he be like? What is the Faust like who, because he can't help it, is afraid of the *great*?

In the recent past, the round-table question was, Are you free? And they had every reason to expect that we would launch into a tirade against dictatorship, and were puzzled and indignant when someone retorted with a question, namely, have they ever asked this question (would they dare ask it) of an Updike or Handke.

The new question is: How do you see the future? And they have every reason to expect us to launch into a song of praise and gratitude in favor of democracy. "How do I see the future? Well, I'm not sure . . . And you?" What do you mean, me? I happen to be the moderator!" Then, when the silence is too great, "In that case, old boy, think of me as a moderator, too, if you don't mind."

The problem

Whom are we moderating?

Translated from the Hungarian by Judith Sollosy

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EVELYN BIRGE VITZ

Rereading Rape in Medieval Literature

In the past few years, the academy, even more perhaps than the culture at large, has had rape on its mind; every scholarly conference now devotes a session or two to the topic. Much of this scholarship is plagued by a tendency toward naive, anachronistic, and inappropriate readings of literary works, high levels of indignation and self-pity, and a pervasive hostility to men. While we can all agree that rape itself must be strongly condemned, I believe that there is room for serious debate on the scholarly handling of the theme of rape in literature. As a student of medieval French literature I will focus on the tradition I know best and then draw out a few points on the implications of this tradition, as I see them, for the contemporary scene.

Many feminists take the view that literary depictions of rape should not distract attention from its ugly reality. Kathryn Gravdal, whose views are at once typical and highly influential, asserts that the "act [of rape] is systematically erased, elided, displaced, naturalized, and rationalized" in Western literature. Rape is too often "troped": the reader's "ordinary response" is suspended and refocused onto "formal or thematic elements." The poet may make the representation of rape "tolerable" by troping it as "moral, comic, heroic, spiritual, or erotic." In short, according to such feminists, the theme of rape should not be poeticized or joked about; rape should be presented seriously, honestly, straightforwardly.

Such demands, however, ignore fundamental features of medieval literary esthetics. Few genres were committed to high seriousness, and many poets dealt lightly with the entire array of human suffering. War, humiliation, illness, and death, like rape, all essentially serious themes, were often referred to casually or comically. Other serious themes, from marriage to the miracles of the saints, were also trivialized, "troped," and turned to comic purposes. In short, the Middle Ages laughed even at its most basic values. This comic spirit was directly related to the entertainment function of works, destined above all to make people laugh in social gatherings – and men and women have in the past laughed at things that we may not find funny today. The medieval sense of humor was, by our standards, sometimes harsh and cruel.

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A quick walking tour through French medieval literature will provide ample evidence. War and warriors are joked about in some epics and romances, such as the charming *Aucassin and Nicolette*. The humiliation of the cuckold, ever a comic theme, fills the fabliaux, which, like farces, also encourage their audience to laugh at illness and death, even at infanticide, often at murder and castration. Why should the theme of rape alone have been exempt from laughter?

No medieval genre subscribed to what we today understand as realism, and "troping" was fundamental to medieval art. We need only to think of the Arthurian and other idyllic settings of so many works, the use of beasts as characters, and the common recourse to allegory; this was no esthetic of realism. And the very title of Kathryn Gravdal's recent indignant study of rape in medieval literature, *Ravishing Maidens* – nothing if not a charming, though to be sure, ironic, *double* entendre – may serve as a reminder of how hard it is to resist tropes and troping. Only the subtitle – *Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* – suggests the harshness of the theme, and it too begins with an attractive alliteration echoing esthetically the "r" of "ravishing" and closes with another pleasing alliteration, "literature and law."

What many feminists really want when they demand that rape be treated not decorously or tastefully but realistically, is not only anachronistic, it is internally incoherent. They want *half* of a realistic treatment of rape. They want the woman's side of brutal rape; the blood or tears of a victim provoking a sense of horror on the part of the audience. But if feelings of the men – the rapists, before, during or after the fact – were depicted, who can doubt that the poets involved would be accused of being misogynistic or pornographic?

Literature has always allowed people to fantasize about – to try on for size – deeds that they would not necessarily commit themselves. Many writers have invited their public to explore with them, through imagination, the psychology of blasphemy, unbelief, incest, adultery, and murder. Of human crimes, should rape alone be excluded? These are, after all, fantasies, and fantasies are not the same as realities.

The moral character of the fantasies of fiction varies greatly: some works emphasize, others avoid confronting, ethical issues. Are there medieval works that deal with rape in a truly "immoral" way? In *The Romance of Renart the Fox*, a comic work strongly focused on legal and feudal matters, Hersent, the wolf's wife, raped by Renart, is indeed treated with little sympathy. But, despite its surface humor, this work as a whole is deeply chilling: no one ever gets any sympathy. All the characters, animals, are either selfish and predatory, or stupid; typically both. We care about none of them. This is, then, a deeply *a*moral work. Its han-

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dling of rape is, however, no worse than its treatment of other forms of brutality. Moreover, such beast epics are not, even today, found offensive by most people, and still find avid readers, both male and female.

Chrétien de Troyes, the twelfth-century father of Arthurian romance, is charged in *Ravishing Maidens* with introducing rape into his works so that men can save women from it:

> In addition to coding the feminine as sexually powerful, the rape scenes in *Erec et Enide* function as a way of signifying heroism, both military and moral. Chrétien frequently sets up an attempted rape by a villain as a chivalric test, permitting the male hero to prove his mettle by interceding to defend the damsel. The brutality of the scenes of rape are overshadowed by the poet's moralizing and by their socializing function: they teach the audience that Christian patriarchy protects noblewomen (and that women urgently need such protection).

In fact, no woman is ever raped in this work. Yet there is some truth to the charge: a few damsels are indeed threatened with rape; heroes rescue them. One might even say that females are threatened *so that* males can rescue them. The threats are indeed generally from members of the lower classes: the aristocracy is glorified. Chrétien has been accused of "exploit[ing] the erotic potential of sexual violence." But there is something very naive about such a position. To blame authors for introducing wicked men or customs into their stories is to miss the very essence of the heroic tradition: without the menace of evil, virtue cannot shine. Nor does Chrétien make inordinate or obsessive use of rape as a danger: his heroes also rescue women from being burned at the stake, losing their inheritance to an evil sister, and being forced to work in sweatshops; they even rescue other males. Women come to the aid of men, as well.

"Chrétien," we are told, "scarcely considers the meanings and consequences of sexual victimization for women." He is accused of treating rape as nothing more than property-theft against patriarchy. But in one of the few passages in Chrétien's romances where there *is* a clear threat of rape, the poet gives us a moving glimpse into the feelings of the young woman in danger:

> Then came out of a chamber the young girl, noble in body, and with a beautiful and pleasing face. She came simply, subdued and silent, for her grief was unending. She kept her head bent toward the ground. Her mother came by her side. The lord wanted to show them his

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> guest, and he had called them forth. They came enveloped in their mantles to hide their tears.

This is hardly a mere depiction of potential property-theft against a man! The passage occurs in *Yvain,* where an evil giant forces a father to choose between giving his daughter to the giant's vilest servants to violate, or having his four sons killed before his eyes. Yvain kills the giant. There *is* no rape here, or for that matter, anywhere else in Chrétien. That is, there are no rape scenes; there are only occasional references to the existence, or to threats, of rape.

It is true that Chrétien's intentions can be ambiguous. It is precisely because of the unreliability of fiction writers' moral preoccupations that, throughout history, stern moralists have cast a blanket anathema onto works of fiction. Feminists who object to works (such as the romances of Chrétien) in which the possibility of rape is raised are taking essentially the same position as the Islamic Fundamentalists who object to Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* because in it the character *dreams* of blaspheming.

References to rape in literature exist, we are told, to "titillate male fantasies." Thus, to assert that some medieval women *also* entertained fantasies of rape is seen by feminists as untrue and insulting to women; it is also (we are told) politically dangerous since if it is admitted that women have imagined being raped, men may feel less guilty when raping them. It is, however, virtually certain that some medieval women did entertain such fantasies. If they could "entertain," not merely "endure," such thoughts, it is, again, because fantasies are not realities: many people have enjoyed things in their fantasy life that they hated in reality. Nor should we be surprised if, for some people at least, sexual pleasure and physical pain are linked.

Such fantasies were apparently no less appealing to women than to men. Let us consider the simple fact that many of the medieval works discussed in recent rape scholarship arose in court settings where women constituted not merely a significant part of the audience, but were major patrons as well. Examples include Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughters: Marie, Countess of Champagne (patroness of Chrétien); Mathilda, wife of Henry the Lion, Duke of Bavaria and Saxony; Eleanor, Queen of Castille; and Joan, married to William, King of Sicily, then to Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse. If such works were deeply displeasing to these powerful women, would they have listened to them, read them, paid for them?

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As a response to this line of thought, we are told that "Chrétien's audience is ideologically masculinist. By this I refer not to the gender composition of Chrétien's public but to its gender ideology: its values were defined by men." But such a position is at once anachronistic and condescending. Since many medieval women saw things differently from modern feminists and were apparently not offended by these works, they must have had the wrong – that is, masculinist, patriarchal – ideas. It is not thought possible that women of the past, like many women today, might actually have disagreed with feminists. Instead, the consciousness of misguided females of the past must be raised, retroactively.

Why were fantasies of rape attractive to medieval women, as well as to men? We would do well to keep in mind the concepts of male and female perfection that pervade medieval literature. A lovable damsel is always described as beautiful, with golden hair and all the trimmings; she may or may not be wise or have other useful skills or endearing features; this varies. A knight worthy of love is generally handsome and noble, but he is invariably strong, bold, fearless – defined by his ability to use force. The French medieval verb for "to rape" was not *violer* but *esforcier*: "to force." Medieval people seem to have considered that for a man to force a woman – to refuse to take no for an answer – was a natural expression of his manhood. It is likely that some medieval women entertained fantasies of being, to some extent at least, forced by attractive men.

Why not simply fantasies of intercourse? Why, specifically, fantasies of rape? This may be hard for many modern women to comprehend. But then again, *are* these fantasies really so alien to modern women? Helen Hazen, in *Endless Rapture: Rape, Romance, and the Female Imagination,* presents powerful evidence that many modern women, including feminists, have had rape fantasies. What of the role of rape and ravishment in major nineteenth-century novels, written by and for women? And surely the immense popularity today of neo-Gothic romances, read almost exclusively by women, and which accord to rape – often referred to as ravishment – a central, and highly romanticized, role suggests that fantasies of forced sex were not peculiar to the medieval imagination.

In any event, for medieval woman, the reality of extramarital sex was exceedingly dangerous, exposing a woman to grave dishonor. The advantage of merely imagining being forced by an attractive man was that it eliminated both the problematic act of assent and anxiety about consequences such as pregnancy. The fantasy allowed a woman to do what she wanted in her imagination, without feeling guilty or worrying about the real consequences of acting out such fantasies.

Where are we to find women's fantasies of in medieval literature? Let's look at the *pastourelles*, songs produced in and for noble courts. The

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primary characters of these poems are a knight and a shepherdess, the former inevitably propositioning the latter. As to outcome: sometimes the shepherdess accepts the love or blandishments of the knight. Sometimes she rudely sends him packing. In roughly a fifth of the poems the knight takes by force the shepherdess – who sometimes thanks him when he is finished: one such *bergère* declares: "biaus amis dos, tote la joie que j'ai me vient de vos" ("handsome sweet friend, all the joy that I have comes to me from you"). The genre is reliably comic, with the knight sometimes looking like a buffoon or a coward. The maidens often have the witty lines and the last word. They may roundly and amusingly denounce knights for their faithlessness in love or their lack of courage.

These *chansons* have occasioned a substantial amount of recent indignation. The *pastourelle* is, we are told, a "celebration of rape" which a male audience enjoyed – and enjoys. One male scholar who politely questioned this view was denounced for having

> published a textbook illustration of literary criticism that reflects a devalorized and idealized concept of the feminine. [His] apology for rape in medieval literature is grounded in a time-honored misogyny that claims that literary paradigms of sexuality are wholly unrelated to sexual violence in our rape culture and that readers should simply sit back and experience their *jouissance* (pleasure/orgasm).

The message is, I am afraid, all too clear: only men from the "amen corner" may speak up.

But these *bergères* – in their charm and beauty, in their wit and in the refinement of their discourse – bear a striking resemblance to aristocratic women. These peasant girls are not tanned, muscular, rough-spoken, smelling faintly of manure. Rather, they are endowed with all the traditional features of beautiful noble females in epic, romance and lyric. The shepherdess is typically beautiful and appealing, white and tender, with a pretty *bouchette* and a bright face. When threatened with forced intercourse, these girls exclaim things like: "Fair sweet mother of God, preserve my chastity!" Their expressions of gratitude after the forced sex also have a courtly ring – as in the passage quoted above. Here is another:

La pasourelle embrassai
  Ki est blanche et tendre;
Desor l'erbe la getai,
  Ne s'en pout desfendre.
Lou jeu d'amors sens atendre

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Li fix per delit,
Et elle a chanteir se prist
'De jolit cuer amerous:
Se j'avoie ameit trois jors,
Je dirois a tous
Bones sont amors'

"I kissed the shepherdess,
who is white and tender;
I threw her down on the grass,
she could not defend herself.
Without waiting I did the game of love
to her with delight,
And she began to sing
'With gay loving heart:
If I had loved for three days,
I would tell everyone
love-affairs are good'."

There is no attempt here to show the feelings or language of real peasant girls. Rather, these *pastourelles* are aristocratic ladies in rustic dress – and such has ever been the case of the pastoral genre. What this strongly suggests is that at least some noble women allowed themselves to enjoy the thought of being forced by knights. These women distanced themselves from the fantasy in several ways: It's not "we" – not "I" – but "those women" who might be thus forced; and the songs are entertaining, so no one need address the issue of rape seriously. In other words, it is not merely medieval aristocratic males, but females as well, who found these charming songs "titillating."

Can we distinguish between male and female fantasies in the *pastourelles*? Some songs emphasize the success of the female partner of the story: the woman's satisfaction at the end – sometimes even her impression that, despite having been raped, it is she who was – paradoxically? – the victor. One poem ends thus: "When I had taken her virginity, she got up on her feet; she shouted: 'I got off well [literally: I escaped well from you!]. It has been thirteen years since I was born, on my word; never did I have a morning I enjoyed more.' "

Is it preposterous – indeed oxymoronic- that a girl who has been taken by force can speak, not just happily, but victoriously of the morning she has just spent? Phallocentric vanity might account for cheerfulness, but it can hardly explain the sense of female triumph. This "victim" does not appear to think of herself as such. One is reminded

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here of the interesting points (though they are offensive to many) made by Camille Paglia in *Sex, Art and American Culture.* Might we think of this young girl as tossing a rather self-satisfied wink at the knight – and at the men and women of the audience? In power-play there is power but also play. Love and sex can be a complex, ritualized game in which women may allow men to force them to do what they intended to do anyway. In short, sexuality is a complex expression of human nature, and there is much more to it than just victims versus victimizers.

Some *pastourelles* end on the invitation to an ongoing relationship between the shepherdess and knight: "When I had done my will with the shepherdess, I got on my palfrey, and she cried out: 'To the son of saint Marie, knight, I commend you; do not forget me, for I am your sweetheart, but come back often.'" This poem gratifies both male fantasies of having women thank them for raping them and the female desire for commitment. In other poems, no strings are attached to the girl's pleasure and gratitude: this is sex without responsibility – and who would deny that this has always been attractive to men?

Let us take a last look at these shepherdesses and the aristocrats who liked hearing about them: if a Marxist-feminist analysis is in order, we could see noble women alienated from themselves and their interests, co-opted by patriarchal class structure, collaborating with the oppressor and laughing at the suffering of peasant rape victims. I have tried to show that this view is erroneous, but one final remark: shepherdesses are the social inferiors of aristocrats. But they are also traditionally understood – and fantasized – as superior to persons of refinement with regard to their relationship to nature. The courtly ladies who listened to these songs may well have been moved to admiration, indeed to envy, of the imaginary *bergères.*

Why should all this shock and surprise us? Unless we are determined to place the entire blame for human misery on male shoulders, must we not acknowledge that some women have fantasized about being forced to have intercourse by some men, just as some men have enjoyed thinking about raping some women? What is shocking is surely that the fantasies in question are about forced sex: rape. Women are caught in the act of entertaining the thought of being sexually subjected by men. But both men and women do in fact have fantasies of which they are ashamed.

If it is true that some women have entertained such fantasies, might knowing this make men less guilty when they commit rape? Saying so (we are told) might even encourage rapists. Now one can never be sure what foolish things people will assert when accused of wrong-doing, but this is surely a weak argument. An analogy: many people have wanted to die; some have had detailed fantasies about their deathbed scene. But this

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does not make the reality of death any less painful; nor does a death wish make murderers any less guilty for their deed: no one could get away with claiming that the victim "really wanted to die." Murder is a crime, an objective act – and most rapes were treated as such, even in the Middle Ages.

True, there has been, historically, some uncertainty as to how to conceptualize and punish rape, an uncertainty which endures today. And men have sometimes shown bad faith, even a callous indifference, to women and their feelings. But there are many issues to which answers are not obvious, and on which people of good will could – and still can – disagree. Such is, I would think, particularly the case for the Middle Ages, when traditions of common law emphasized in general the need for compensation for damage to property. It was clear that, for example, a virgin who had been raped was damaged, but it was less obvious how the damage to a raped married woman – a *fortiori*, a prostitute – should be understood, quantified, and restitution made or punishment taken. Was it a good or bad solution to allow a rapist to marry the woman he had forced if she accepted? (Many feminists are appalled by this solution.)

Historically, rape has always been understood within a conceptual context based on implicit metaphors. Thus, rape can be seen as damage (to the honor of the individual or the family, to the physical person), or as theft, and so on. In America today the key legal principle seems to be the right to choose: thus, rape does not constitute, for example, damage to a woman's honor (an antiquated concept), but is an infringement on her right to choose her own sexual partners.

In any event, contemporary women must be prepared to confront the issue of rape squarely. Let's stop claiming that only men have enjoyed thinking about forced sex, and that, if women have listened to and read works containing rape fantasies, it's all men's fault. This charge infantilizes women, implying that we have no mind or will of our own.

Rape, it is said, is easy to define and to distinguish from other modes of sexual intercourse; male scholars are blamed for not having recognized and castigated it in the past. But on the other hand, we are told that every act by which a male dominates or possesses a woman, erotically or in other ways, is an act of rape: *all* is sexual power play; *all* heterosexual sex is conceived as rape. In fact, some today claim that males can't do anything *but* rape women – and *everything* that men (and patriarchy) do to women is rape. So the Virgin Mary has been called the ultimate rape victim. Powerful music by male composers is denounced for raping its female listeners. (One wonders what it does to its male listeners.) Wordsworth's poem "The Solitary Reaper" is a disguised rape fantasy –

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though the only act of violence that the poet perpetrates on the girl in the field is to "rape" her song and turn it into a poem: *his* poem.

A major thrust of the current scholarship is to find rape scenes where none appeared to be. Many literary scenes that are clearly not rape – or are rape only if anything and everything is – are now called rape: stolen kisses, kidnappings, and forced marriages are troped into rape. If "Euro-American literary traditions" are denounced because in them rape is ever "systematically erased, elided, displaced, naturalized, and rationalized," one might reply that today rape scenes are all too often multiplied, magnified, amplified, and just plain fabricated.

Examples: there is a scene early in Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval* where a youthful hero (misunderstanding the good advice his mother has given him; he is rather a dodo) kisses a woman several times against her will. Perceval causes her all manner of grief by this act (she has a jealous lover), but he does *not* rape her, as has been claimed. Or let's look at the various scenes in Chrétien's *Cligés:* here too, we do have women (mostly Fénice, the heroine) being carried off repeatedly, but there is no rape whatsoever, and part of the time, getting carried off is her own idea. So though we are told that "Chrétien spins a tale in which the heroine's body is pulled from leader to leader," only in the scenes of her fake death does Fécine actually suffer anything, and that pain results from the attempts of the doctors to revive her. The doctors are, admittedly, cruel and repulsive – but women come and throw them out the window!

It is instructive and disturbing (I wish it were surprising) to note that, despite all the current blurring of distinctions between rape and other acts of force, no one ever mentions indignantly the scene in *Yvain* where the hero, naked and mad, is discovered asleep in the forest by some women. In a comic scene, a young servant girl, instead of rubbing magic ointment only on Yvain's temples, gets carried away and rubs it all over the naked, unconscious knight. He is then apparently sexually fondled against his will – and as a deeply honorable, and apparently chaste, knight, he would presumably have been mortified. Perhaps this is yet another scene produced by a male poet for a smirking male audience? But do only males smirk?

Distinguishing between real rape and other kinds of sexual intercourse is not always easy, either. *The Romance of the Rose* by Jean de Meung points out the problems. Is the final scene, in which the lover enters the shrine and plucks the rose, a scene of rape or not? These days, it tends to be treated as though it unquestionably were. But the central theme of this work is courtship, and the characters represent the different allegorical figures that a lover must meet and win over to gain the favor(s) of a woman. The text is ambiguous. There is force, but the obstacle

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seems to be anatomical (this is intercourse with a virgin), not the maiden's refusal. In the deflowerment it is not clear who is in charge of the female decision-making process. Nor is it clear whether, afterwards, the female partner – rendered by male pronouns referring to the rosebud and "Bel Accueil" (fair, or warm, welcome) – is angry with the Lover. The Rose appears happy with the outcome, but the emphasis is on her (its) sweetness rather than her satisfaction. Such problems *will* arise when male characters in literature make love to allegorical flowers and shrines! The Rose "herself," a symbol of the maiden's private parts, is an object, not a subject, of desire; she cannot speak. Women again silenced by men? Yet the Lover *is* on speaking terms with the Rose's major spokesperson, "Bel Accueil," who possesses intentionality.

But the end of *The Romance of the Rose* raises a fundamental question: just how important *was* consent in the Middle Ages? In modern literature, love and desire are generally explained in terms of choice and personal taste – plus chance. But the medieval period spoke of falling in love almost exclusively through metaphors of violence: 1) Attack: the god of love shoots arrows through the eyes of the lover into his or her heart. 2) Prison: a lover is the prisoner of Love. Lovers are locked up and someone else has the key. 3) Illness: lovers come down with permanent fevers, and suffer from chills and sweats, or they become lepers. 4) Madness: lovers are irrational, mad. 5) Potions: lovers have swallowed fatal love-drinks and poisons. Personal choice had nothing to do with any of these foundational concepts about love, seen as a violent experience which happened to you – entered or penetrated you, took possession of you, corrupted your reason and imprisoned you, male or female – against your will. *All* love was conceived, at least in part, as "rape" and "rapture," for both men and women.

If this medieval view of all lovers as victims contrasts strongly with most modern views, well, even today people get caught up in love affairs against their better judgment; they become obsessed and are unable to stop intoxicating but self-destructive behavior. Like Tristan and Iseult – and a whole throng of medieval ancestors – they suffer the torments of love against their will. Despite the fact that in medieval metaphorical terms *no one* consented to love – despite this language of catastrophe: assault, prison, poison, madness, and disease – medieval people do appear often to have enjoyed loving and being in love. If they were in prison, they didn't want to be released. If they were sick, they didn't especially want a doctor. Crazy, they came to prefer the madness of love to sanity. My point is not – I trust it is obvious – that medieval women wanted to or liked to be raped but rather that our radical modern dichotomy be-

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tween compulsion and consent cannot, without anachronism, be applied to the medieval period. (It may be unrealistic even today.)

Let me now set these medieval works and issues into the context of the contemporary debate on rape. We live in an era that is enormously preoccupied with free choice, and we are shocked when people's ability to control their bodies or their lives is seriously infringed. But in the medieval period, people had far different – and by our standards lower – expectations of control. They expected to be forced to do all manner of things, at least some of which they nonetheless managed to enjoy. We should be wary of projecting our understanding of human reality back onto them. It is true that, over the centuries, women have been much put upon by men – and *real* rape is, without question, a terrible thing. But it is surely worth reminding ourselves that all human beings have caused pain to members of their own and the opposite sex. To inflict suffering on others, possession of or even ready access to a – the – phallus is not necessary. Nor are women the only ones to have suffered; so have children, the poor, the old – even men. Moreover, terrible as it assuredly is, can rape really be said to be the *worst* thing that women have had to endure? What about murder, famine, slavery, and other catastrophes?

And let's put this current obsession with victimhood under brief scrutiny: this is the latest American pseudo-psychological discovery. We have all been abused and mistreated by others and need recovery groups. (In this expanded framework, women have no monopoly on suffering.) It is astonishing that we today who are so fortunate should think of ourselves as archetypal victims, projecting our sense of victimhood – our poetics and our hermeneutics of resentment and self-pity – back onto other, arguably less happy, eras, and trying to raise the consciousness of women dead for eight hundred years to the fact that they were oppressed!

The indignation which so often suffuses scholarly discourse about the literary theme of rape – represented most commonly, in fact, by fantasies of forced sex and unexecuted threats of sexual violence – is unfortunate. Much feminist scholarship anachronistically applies modern distinctions and a modern sensibility to medieval works. It is also unsophisticated in its understanding of the nature of literature and of the pleasures – sometimes morally dubious, it is true – that fiction has provided to men and women over the centuries. Finally, this scholarship, with its simplistic ideological unpinnings, appears to forget just how complex – and mysterious! – a part of life sex is.

If we must keep talking about rape, might we commit ourselves to discussing it in a more fair-minded and historically informed fashion?

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POEMS

Charles Tomlinson

The Question

The path to the fieldgate is covered in leaves
And the blossom whose name I failed to learn
Has disappeared with summer, its foliage
Bearing the bruises of the season. I must defer
That learning now to another year
When frost, shearing back to anatomy
The parallels of these hedges I walk between,
Will have cleansed a way through winter
And out beyond, to where in the rising scent
The question still to be pondered is hanging in air.

A Name on the Map

I ask myself what Fishkill must be like.
There is a river pouring into town
Under its elegant bridge; I scan the house-fronts
For their carpentered rhythmic trim, baroque
Curlicues in a wilderness that was.
It is the name drives the imagination back
To when the fish were plentiful, the Indians
With wet, red arms spearing up shad on shad
Out of the falls. Next time I cross the state,
I shall investigate the curio shops,
And perhaps recover from the dust
Some modest sketch, composed – though left unsigned
By the hand of (could it be?) Church or Bierstadt –
One closing winter afternoon just when
The artist was not thinking about mountains:
"Fishkill in February", in whites and gold,
And let into the sky in bold relief,
The cross above the college towards sunset.

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Michael Longley

Water-Lily

I

As if Venus and Betelgeuse had wings
And instead of mountainside or tree-top

Had found the right place for falling stars
And glided to a standstill on the lake . . .

II

after Frederick van Eeden

I love the white water-lily, immaculate,
Unfolding her corolla in daylight.

Rising from the cold sediments of the lake
She has seen the light and then unlocked

Her heart of gold: on the surface at one
With herself, her very own creation.

III

Finding my way by night-lights in the sky
I splash through puddles the size of the moon

To a lake the size of the Milky Way
Which I shall call the water-lily lake.

Hippomanes

Randiest of all, taking in their stride mountains
And rapids for sex, biting your hand off, mares,
Kindled in springtime, gonads ablaze, silhouetted
On a cliff where they turn as one to face the wind,
Snuffle the air and often – not a stallion in sight –
Are impregnated:
they have been ridden by the wind

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And clatter down rocky scree to the valley floor
And scatter, not to the east and sunrise, but south
Where the wind sheds tears from a sky in mourning
And a slippery liquid oozes from their quims,
Hippomanes no less, collected by jealous step-
Mothers and blended with herbs and mumbo-jumbo.

Sándor Csoóri

May the Water Keep Vigil with Me

I wake. Outside there's a lake
and a foreign country's darkness.
Inscrutable cry of bird
under the bushes,
as though someone were being murdered.

My head's heavy with drinking,
heavy with myself. In my recent dream
shirtless soldiers were running
and combing the ruffled park
with raised pitchforks.

Were they looking for me? For you, the long-banished?
I can't remember anymore. A blood stain
shone darkly on a stone. Past that, a storm lantern,
overturned. The flame mingled with the mud
and made everything so finite, so shameless.

I'd like to sleep for spite, too. I'd like to forget
my European dream, the horror of those flat on their backs,
but in this foreign silence I'm just stumbling and groping;
I turn on the tap, let the water flow,
may it keep vigil with me till morning.

Translated from the Hungarian by Len Roberts and Anette Marta

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Jacqueline Osherow

Calling Emily Dickinson to Come, as Guide, Out West

Certainly, you're a strange choice for a guide,
A painfully timid woman who's been nowhere,
Rarely, for years at least, even outside.

But there are things I want to know about the air
And by all accounts you and she were intimate;
She'd slip in late at night to braid your hair

And with every twisted strand divulge a secret.
Perhaps it was her rendezvous with thunder
That urged you into your one wild night.

Who knows how far afield she helped you wander?
Perhaps she introduced the sea, the moor,
The way the heather's reckless bells meander

To the brinks of cliffs to ring the waves ashore.
Perhaps she even learned to mimic their chime
Or brought a tiny perfumed souvenir

Right through the opened window to your room.
After that you never wanted to leave.
I should like a grand tour of that room:

The tricks of swallows orbiting the eave,
The most elaborate ceiling cracks and floorboards,
The piles and piles of poems you didn't save

But distributed, instead, among the birds
Who promised to pass them on to flies and bees.
In those, perhaps, you didn't stoop to words.

They were pure reverie, like your prairies.
You'd show those too, if the tour were thorough
And pens cut from the feathers of passing geese,

Each an instantaneous perfect arrow
That would overwhelm its mark at breakneck speed
And, without harming a bone, pluck its marrow.

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You needn't be a spectre in the Underworld.
(You don't believe in it, do you? Nor do I)
But I'm hoping you'll be willing to make a trade:

If you'd just show me how to shoot one bull's eye
And introduce that friend of yours, the air,
I'll bring you to an open tract of sky

And wildness you can't have dreamed was here
In this, your own, our own, unlikely country.
Surely reports came through that you would hear,

Lavinia would read them out loud in the pantry
While you were making puddings or baking bread,
The view outside the window placid, wintry;

You'd look dreamy-eyed but shake your head.
Such preposterous tales of breadth and width and height.
But they were true. I'll show you. *I'll* be guide –

We'll reverse Dante and Virgil – while *you* write.
You see, I'm not quite up to what I've seen.
I should have stayed at home, always worn white,

But there was so much out there, Emily, and I like green.
Besides I want to know what you'd have made –
If a garden snake is *Zero at the Bone* –

Of hordes of spires of rock, all scalded red,
The wicked turned by spirits into stone
Or so the local people have always said.

If only they'd turned all Amherst into stone
And the tone-deaf editors who changed your rhymes.
You wouldn't have had to stay up there alone

And might have known how landscape climbs and climbs
Until you have no vantage point, no explanation
Except what you can summon from the Psalms.

And the land in maps that press their way to ocean
Turns out to be covered in endless sage
That goes silver at the slightest provocation.

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How will you travel over it? By train? By stage?
Perhaps you'll choose a huge hot-air balloon?
How will you fit the dashes on the page

That describes your first liaison with a canyon?
Don't look so bewildered. I've read your poem.
I know you claim that these things needn't be seen.

But this absurd superfluity of room
Is precisely what it means to be American
And not a square inch in it for a poem.

That's why I need you for a chaperon.
For me, you see, before I came out West
You were what it meant to be American

And I didn't know if I was cursed or blessed –
To sit up in a garret on your own,
All that stunning marksmanship unnoticed.

But I had you. You'd written what you'd written.
I wanted to live in that same country.
I liked to think that we had things in common

And it didn't seem so long to wait – a century –
To have one's book on every library's shelf.
In my own way, I'm just as greedy as Dante,

Trying to have you here all to myself.
Dante at least was worthy of his guest
While I am stuck with this colossal gulf –

Not just this vast expanse to East from West
But my wordiness, my clumsiness, my *life.*
Virgil came to Dante as a ghost

But I wanted to bring you here *alive*
And you such a shy woman and I so brazen,
With nothing to give you. I don't even drive,

Barely know the West. I'm its newest citizen.
Besides, you're right. A poet needn't see.
If I actually thought I'd made you listen

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I'd have to beg you wildly to forgive me
For barging in like this with such poor aim,
Dreaming I could imitate your bull's eye,

Going without permission to your room
(It's true, Emily, I've already been there)
And publishing books of poems in my lifetime

Without even having met your friend, the air,
Not to mention daring to write down your name
And pretending, for an instant, you might hear.

Stephen Yenser

Kerouacky

I want my Partotooty
Sweetie backpie back
– Mexico City Blues

Oh, where are those lovely early smogs,
Those sheer, cherry smazes of 1959
That jazzed up the evening sun
Before it went out for the orgasmic night
In crazy organzas of blushes and jacaranda blues.

In the old days, the bold, the bop days on the beach,
In the starry daze of those fried nights, those satyr days,
Skinny-dipping, cocky, nippled in the bud,
Hip and slaphappy, dripping moon and copping feels,
We promised that we'd leave no tern unstoned.
Riffs, we wanted, rough drafts, *the gist of poesy*, the jism,
Just drift and spin – and lowest tides got high with us,
Before we roach-clipped the kick ticks and, bushwhacked,
lipstuck,
Hellbent, slabhappy now, laid some rubber, split
To crash, and to record some slipsticked *Z*s.

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We never cried over spilt milk, spilt pot, spilt seed,
Back then, before the tarring of the feathery tribes
(So to speak), the greasing of palms, the rigging of the bay . . .
One night someone changed the sign to read:
"$50 FINE FOR LETTERING."

Back before that, we were still learning
How to treat in turn the nasty sewage badly,
And the city's sordes of insults rolled off the coast
Like water off a great merganser's back . . .
One morning it was thick crude.

So here's one last, one long, one wasted breath,
Axed out of that beat, beat, beat past
To weave into a basted, blasted wreath
To float out over those blessed but bested wraiths,
Oiled, even *polluted*, *yeah*, but *far-out*, *man, way-out* at last.

Kay Ryan

Doubt

A chick has just so much time
to chip its way out, just so much
egg energy to apply to the weakest spot
or whatever spot it started at.
It can't afford doubt. Who can?
Doubt uses albumen
at twice the rate of work.
One backward look by any of us
can cost what it cost Orpheus.
Neither may you answer
the stranger's knock;
you know it is the Person from Porlock
who eats dreams for dinner,
his napkin stained the most delicate colors.

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George Bradley

The Cliché Made Strange

It must never be a public thing, although
The flourish of its inscription decorate the obelisk,
Though its cadences be trumpeted from parapets, yet
Its inmost note may not be heard except
By inmost ear, a murmur, an insinuation, an aside –
Though its practice be bought and sold, its outward act
A commodity and abundant, still its secret smack
May not be savored save on tremulous occasion,
On midnights amidst a pattering of rain,
On mornings when the chill air is its own chapel –
Except two people meet in earnest, its heart may not be known,
Paramours, communicants, their caresses feeling for
The tenuous integument by which its instinct is expressed –
Except renewed, it may not be, as it is
An imminence, a becoming, and yet an origin,
The only past to which we can in confidence return –
A mood, an imposition, an eccentricity,
The same old story never told the same way twice,
In mind contiguous to mind the spirit manifests
And cannot cease to do so for those who still desire
Its reassuring shiver, its comfort and disturbance,
An ache too intimate for naming, this nuzzling, this nothing,
The subtle commonplace, the table-talk of gods,
All that is most human and all that is most odd.

Amanda Powell

Seeing Raymond Carver

Turning left onto Willamette, I saw
the famous dead writer driving an oncoming car,

exactly the dark humor of his face, half
lowering but the gray clouded brow half

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touched with glints from a full, unstinted shine
that might be months away but is not forgotten –

today's Northwest November weather exactly,
just as he looks, looking up from the book's back jacket,

and not utterly unlikely he'd drive in Eugene, near Spencer's Butte,
geographically speaking; no longer hung-over, but

perhaps like the mountains beclouded by some mood near noon,
– though three years, three months and about four days gone –

it wasn't he, of course. It was some other bright,
grim, witty, Irish-faced devil, alight

with what he'll say when he gets there. And yet it was,
too – as we are, in a great mix, each other, by the tricky grace
of changeable weather, and memory, and place.

K. E. Duffin

Male

Orion on his knees in the dusty-haired trees
        his mauve cloak of sky
        shrugging off its stars,

or beginning a frozen cartwheel after Taurus,
        that divining rod with eye
        of ruby rivaling Mars,
reminds us of the delicacy of men,
        who were never made for fire,
        mud or vaults of sea

though history always packed them dumbly in,
        supple bodies for hire,
        a biomass for free,

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leaving a few sketchy, starlit scars
where the buried photos are
of children along the shore

taught to name the bumbling hunter above,
who leaps in his airless game
after map of bull or stag,

a trapezoid whose corners slowly move
through wastes of brutal fame,
the sad shoulders tugged

on the rack of space in opposite directions,
a blinking devolution
without a human face.

Selwyn Pritchard

The Last of England

i.m. John Clare 1973-1864

I remembered Pendle, strapped in, waiting to go,
the low eaves, steep slate roof, miles from the road
under Brown Clee and a smattering of snow.

Flakes floated in the kitchen as we stood
at the door, holding hands, Katie, Bu, and me,
the roar of the Teme undercutting a hanging wood
on the Hereford bank, windows forced by Autumn bluster,
snow cleanly carpeting flags worn by clod-hopping boots
which once thumped the steam bridge from Salop to Worcester.

At that confluence of waters where old shires met,
we hesitated, turned away in December dusk long ago,
as I recalled gratuitously in the hurtling jet

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as it lifted from Heathrow . . . (Would I come there again?)
climbed over M4, industrial estates and fields of rape below,
banked so I saw the spire of Oxford, where I heard urbane

Mozart played by the Warden of Wadham in Jacobean chapel gloom
(Sir Isaiah Berlin had inflated his rubber ring) and the glow
of evening lit the glory of the glass and tune.

Astounding in the streets outside, English beggars sit,
so young and pale, reasonably reciting woe
and asking only for 'a little change.'
Some hopes!
That's it.

We are into cloud and climbing, eleven hours to go.
Soon drinks and dinner in the sun, Tokyo . . . then Australia,
Siberia's page below us blank as Pendle's under snow.

Don Bogen

Bouquinistes

Old prints and books, old medals, buttons, sepia postcards –
I admired the compact abundance,
the invisible careful choices that made it all seem rich,
the ingenious green wooden stands themselves
set apart yet open to the street, the trees and the river.
Living in two worlds, I was drawn to the freedom of this browsing,
its small bright discoveries within the dailiness of the setting.
There are books I wanted to enter just for the sense
of being lost in them yet still aware of a breeze in the chestnut,
my thoughts of you, the river, its currents, islands, where the bridges are.

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S. Ben-Tov

The Psalm of the Shutters

Slit
zinc shutters,
hot as armor,
radiate
ten white
lines on the dim walls, write
a prayer
so exact
it is light; the opened shutters sway
wide,
ordinary
hours trek
out like fighters,
and back.

Oh citadel
rotten with sun!

Jerusalem awaits
the tranced afternoon
that ambers each
tree branch, or glass pane, within reach,
the brown children scattering a fountain
that juggles, winks and lives
under a spell,
out of dust a yellow-crested hoopoe's dive
toward mountains
folded in haze.

What is not lost gives
rise to soft praise.

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Fiama Hasse Pais Brandão

The Decade of Sisyphus

The tenth time he falls
Sisyphus is filled with joy: the mountain now is elsewhere,
its slopes transparent, even more than the air's.
Penitent, he had watched
the massacre, blood clotting
in the foothills, certain spots like wounds.
And yet the stone he's carrying is volatile.
He has left in his past those who
in a spherical city
remain eternal. Far away, there's an engraving,
the age of war. The stone stops,
the tenth silence marks his
decade, the field now air above the rooted city.
Who will follow Sisyphus, those piles of books,
those slabs of stone?

Translated from the Portugese by Alexis Levitin

Simon Perchik

*

This attic has always sided with the bombers
leveled off and at exactly noon
you can hear the all-clear, begin

that slow climb to check for leaks
and though rain is no longer a single thread
there's still a trace, a tiny seam

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broken open over a small cemetery
where through this shapeless hole
a young girl breathes in your face

wants to tell you something in secret
the way the sun still whispers
to the stones it left on Earth

– at this height your hand folds tenderly
around another till the silence
becomes shoreline still trying

twice each day to bring the sea
back up with it – 30,000 feet
half graveyard, half fuselage, half

before each flight you inspect the wooden crates
keepsakes and among the ruins two useless radios
both tuned to the same station

as if there's a difference in the weather
one step from another
when you bring flowers to remember

rain or no rain – you look around for winds
and the weeds need watering
though you press your face against the dirt

- what grows here are those stones
already clouds, almost in formation
and on her lips clinging to the ground.

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Jenny Joseph

Old night

There is a dark river called Chaos,
And it glitters, being thick and dark, with cusps of brilliance
Which make nothing visible.
To its bank even the sunny child
Destined, you'd say, for open meadows, comes.

No river of forgetfulness
Lethe or Acheron or tide that brings
Annihilation where all roll to rest.
No, this is the flood one, the Stirrer
The one that whirls rot, garbage
Suddenly above its banks, throws up
Defilation, broken things.
Equally swept to this littoral, shells
Of uprightness, the beaming surfaces
Of mother-of-pearl success.
Whichever road they were going they arrive at this shore.
Here good comportment stands with smiling face
Nevertheless for virtue come to this ditch.

You are weeping in some smashed place,
A place now used only for getting out of,
All its windows of light shuttered up, bedaubed.
Grit stings and greasy rubbish mires your ankles
As you wait in this sour wreck for shattered buses.
What has happened?
Your idea of your life
Our idea of a town –
Come to this?

Some think they can ride it as the skateboard boys,
Manipulating gravity, shoot out from dark tunnels
Balancing up into daylight on a wave of will
Their lithe persons now nothing but extreme desire.

But not this chariot.

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Empedocles said that love comes out of Chaos
Twisting up and then unraveling the rope.
That unsorting the elements, muddling the order, mixing
Gives the momentum from which love leaps, as the spindle
Twirling back up the shaft, winds and unwinds.
But I do not think that love is why the dark glitter
At every turn of beauty pulls us down:
As blood threads flesh this wild and greedy dark
Veins existence. Fighting the elements
Is what has made us human, and doing so kills us.

Some would say:
Ride the rails then, swing and catch the trapeze bars,
Jump on the bumping cars, run off, twist the handles
To crash into the next, leap off laughing
And dodge the lumbering furies;
Like the graceful ne'er-do-wells who cavort and slap
Their boards about on concrete under the walkways,
Leap to the arms of the magnet your iron is set to,
Ride the lurid glitter, the spume of the dark.

Konstantin Pavlov

New Soul

Death? – a business trip, another mission, another image?
A Reincarnation of yesterday's Incarnation . . .
And – something frightening, ever-present –
the Old Soul's controlling interest in the New Soul,
keeping it from becoming too presumptuous.

I am afraid, Scoundrel:
You may appear again,
reincarnated in a saint with a chipped aureole.
And the sons of the people You've killed
may greet you as a New Revelation,
because of the lack of nine degrees
in your present nimbus,
as an expression of empathy
for your impaired circumference.

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They are being reincarnated, they are being reincarnated . . .
Two or three or five or seven or ten Spirits
are trading:
hides, horns, wings, tails, halos –
eternal props.
Mutually, by agreement, they are devouring each other,
recreating their opposite –

a Reincarnation.
And self-preservation.

I am also waiting my turn –
holding the skin of my previous soul in my hands –
hoping for something better,
sitting (and shivering) on the tail I had yesterday . . .

The New Reincarnation is slow in coming.

Translated from the Bulgarian by Ludmilla G. Popova-Wightman

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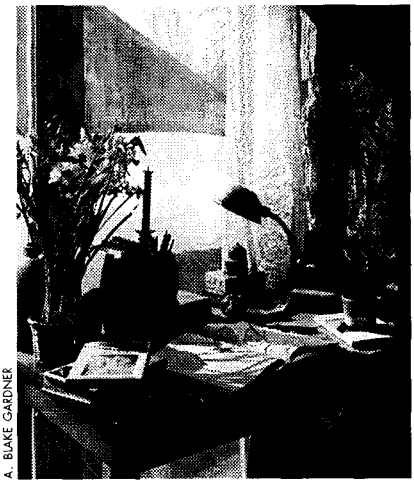

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FICTION

LEONARD MICHAELS

A Girl with a Monkey

In the spring of the year following his divorce, while traveling alone in Germany, Beard fell in love with a young prostitute named Inger and cancelled his plans for further travel. They spent two days together, mainly in Beard's room. He took her to restaurants for lunch and dinner. The third day Inger told Beard she needed a break. She had had a life before Beard arrived. Now she had only Beard. She reminded him that the city was famous for its cathedral and zoo. "You should go look. There is more to see than Inger Stutz." Besides, she'd neglected her chores, and missed a dental appointment as well as classes in paper restoration at the local museum.

When she mentioned the classes, Beard thought to express interest, ask questions about paper restoration, but he wasn't interested. He said, "You could miss a few more." His tone was glum. He regretted it, but felt justified because she'd hurt his feelings. He'd spent a lot of money on Inger. He deserved better. He wasn't her life, but he'd cancelled his plans, and he wouldn't be staying forever. She didn't have to remind him of the cathedral and zoo. Such things had been noted in his travel itinerary by the agent in San Francisco. He also had a travel guide.

Beard had in fact planned to do a lot of sightseeing, but, moments after he checked into his hotel there was a knock at the door and he supposed it was a bell hop or chambermaid, and he saw the girl. She was very apologetic and apparently distressed. She'd come to the wrong room. Beard was charmed, not deceived. He invited her in.

Now, the evening of the third day, Beard said, "I don't want to hear about your chores or classes." He would double her fee.

Beard wasn't rich, but he'd inherited money and the court excluded his inheritance from the divorce settlement. It was enough money to let him be expansive, if not extravagant. He'd quit his job in television production in San Francisco, and gone to the travel agent. The trip cost plenty, but having met Inger and fallen in love, he was certainly getting value for his money until she said, "Please don't tell me what I could do or could not do. And it isn't a question of money."

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The remark was inconsistent with her profession, even if Inger was still young, only a semi-pro, but it was the way she said "could," exactly as Beard had said it, that bothered him. He detected hostility in her imitation, and he was afraid that he'd underestimated Inger, maybe provoked a distaste for his character that was irredeemable.

He'd merely expressed his feelings, merely been sincere, yet somehow offended her. Her reaction was unfair. He didn't even know what he'd said that was offensive. Worse yet, he was afraid that he'd established with Inger the same relation he'd had with his ex-wife. In twenty-five years of marriage, she'd had many fits of irrational hostility over his most trivial remarks. Beard could never guess what he might say to make her angry. Now in another country, in love with another woman – a prostitute, no less – Beard was caught up in miseries he'd divorced.

"The more things change," he thought, "they don't."

Inger knew nothing about Beard's marriage, but she'd heard that one's clients sometimes become attached, and it was hard to get free of them. Beard was only her fifth client. What troubled her particularly was that she'd upset Beard more than she might have expected. He sounded deranged, shouting in the crowded restaurant, "I'll pay double," and slapping the table. How embarrassing. What had the waiter thought? She felt slightly fearful. "You are a sweet man," she said. "Very generous. Many women in Germany would be yours for nothing."

"I prefer to pay for you. Can't you understand?"

She understood but shook her head no, astonished and reproachful at once. "I understand that you are self-indulgent. If I were like you, I would soon become dissolute. My life would be irregular. I would feed my monkey table scraps instead of monkey food, because it gives me pleasure. She would then beg every time I sit down at the dinner table. It would be no good for her or for me."

"I'm not your monkey."

"You think you're more complicated."

Beard was about to smile, but realized Inger wasn't making a joke. Her statement was flat and profoundly simple. Beard wasn't sure what she intended. Maybe she was asking a question. But it seemed she really saw in Beard what she saw in her monkey, as if all sentient beings were equivalent. She put him in mind of Saint Francis of Assisi.

As had happened several times during his acquaintance with Inger, he was overcome by a sort of mawkish adoration. His eyes glistened. He'd never felt this way about a woman. Spiritual love. At the same time, he had a powerful desire to ravish her. Of course he'd done that repeatedly in the hotel room, in the bed, and on the floor, and each time his desire had been satisfied, yet it remained undiminished, unsatisfied.

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"Well, what are you, then?" she asked softly.

Beard, surprising himself, said, "I'm a Jew." With a rush of strong and important feeling, it struck him that he was indeed a Jew.

Inger shrugged. "I might have Jewish blood. Who knows about such things?"

Beard had anticipated a more meaningful, more sensitive, response. He saw instead, once again, the essential Inger. She was, in her peculiar way, as innocent as a monkey. She had no peculiar, cultivated sensibility. No idea of history. She was what she was, as if she'd dropped into the world yesterday. A purely objective angelic being. He had her number, he thought. Having her number didn't make him detached. His feelings were no less intense, no less wonderful, and – no other word for it – unsatisfied. She got to him like certain kinds of music. He thought of unaccompanied cello suites.

"Inger," he whispered, "have pity. I'm in love with you."

"Nonsense. I'm not very pretty."

"Yes, you are."

"If that's how you feel . . . "

"It is."

"You feel this now. Later, who knows?"

"Could you feel something for me?"

"I'm not indifferent."

"That's all?"

"You may love me."

"Thanks."

"You're welcome. But I think . . . "

"I'm self-indulgent."

"It's a burden for me."

"I'll learn to be good."

"I applaud this decision."

"When can I see you again?"

"You will pay me what you promised?"

"Of course."

She studied his face, as if to absorb a new understanding, and then, with no reservations in her voice, said, "I will go home tonight. You may come for me tomorrow night. You may come upstairs and meet my roommate."

"Must you go home?"

"I dislike washing my underwear in a bathroom sink."

"I'll wash your underwear."

"I have chores, things I have to do at home. You are frightening me."

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"I'll call a taxi."

"No. My bicycle is still at the hotel."

The next morning Beard went to a barber shop and then shopped for a new jacket. So much time remained before he could see Inger. In the afternoon, he decided to visit the cathedral, a gothic structure of dark stone. It thrust up suddenly, much taller than the surrounding houses, on a curved narrow medieval street. Beard walked around the cathedral, looking at saintly figures carved into the stone. Among them he was surprised by a monkey, the small stone face hideously twisted, shrieking. He couldn't imagine what it was doing there, but the whole cathedral was strange, so solemn and alien amid the ordinary houses along the street.

Men in business suits, students in their school uniforms, and housewives carrying sacks of groceries walked by without glancing at the cathedral. None seemed to have any relation to it, but surely they felt otherwise. They lived in this city. The cathedral was an abiding feature of their landscape, stark and austere, yet complicated in its carvings. Beard walked inside. As he entered the nave, he felt reduced, awed by the space. Most of all, he felt lonely. He felt a good deal, but it struck him that he could never understand the power and meaning of the Christian religion. With a jealous and angry God, Jews didn't need such space for worship. A plain room would do. It would even be preferable to a cathedral, more appropriate to their intimate, domestic connection to the deity, someone they had been known to defy and even to fight until, like Jonah, they collapsed into personal innerness, in agonies and joys of sacred delirium.

Walking back to the hotel, he remembered that Inger had talked about her monkey. The memory stirred him, as he had been stirred in the restaurant, with sexual desire. Nothing could be more plain, more real. It thrust against the front of his trousers. He went into a coffee shop to sit for a while and pretend to read a newspaper.

That evening in the hotel room, with his fresh haircut and new jacket, he presented himself to the bathroom mirror. He had once been handsome. Qualities of handsomeness remained in his solid, leonine head, but there were dark sacks under his eyes that seemed to carry years of pain and philosophy. They made his expression vaguely lachrymose. "You are growing the face of a hound," he said to his reflection, but he was brave and didn't look away, and he decided he must compensate for his losses. He must buy Inger a present, something new and beautiful, a manifestation of his heart.

In a jewelry store window in the hotel lobby, he noticed a pair of gold earrings set with rubies like tiny globules of blood. Obviously expensive. Much too expensive for his travel budget, but he entered the

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store and asked what they cost, though he knew it was a mistake to ask. He was right. The price was even higher than he had guessed. It was nearly half of his inheritance. Those earrings plus the cost of the trip would leave him barely enough money to pay his rent in San Francisco, and he didn't have a job waiting for him when he returned.

He left the store and walked about the streets looking in other store windows. Every item that caught his attention was soon diminished by his memory of the swirl of gold and the impassioned red glob within.

Those earrings were too expensive. An infuriating price. It had been determined by a marketing demon, thought Beard, because the earrings now haunted him. He grew increasingly anxious as minutes passed and he continued walking the streets, pointlessly looking into shop windows, unable to forget the earrrings.

He was determined not to return to the jewelry store, but then he let himself think, if he returned to the story only to look at the earrings – not to buy them – they would be gone. So it was too late to buy the earrings, he thought, as he hurried back to the store. To his relief, they were still there and more beautiful than he remembered.

The salesperson was a heavily made-up woman in her fifties, who wore a black, finely pleated, silk dress and gold-rimmed eyeglasses. She approached and stood opposite Beard at the glass counter. He looked down strictly at a necklace, not the earrings, though only a little while ago he'd asked her the price of the earrings. She wasn't fooled. She knew what he wanted. Without being asked, she withdrew the earrings from their case and put them on the counter. Beard considered this highly impertinent, but he didn't object. As if making a casual observation, she said, "I've never seen earrings like these before. I'm sure I'll never see any like these again."

"They're much too expensive."

"Do you think so?" She looked away toward the street, apparently uninterested in his opinion. It was late afternoon, nearly closing time. Her indifference to Beard's remark annoyed him.

"Too expensive," he said, as if he were inviting her to haggle.

"Should I put them away?" she asked.

Beard didn't answer.

"They are expensive, I suppose," she said. "But prices fluctuate. If you like, I'll keep your business card and phone you if the earrings aren't sold in a few weeks."

Beard heard contempt in her voice, as if she were saying the point of jewelry is to be expensive, even too expensive. He drew his wallet slowly from his jacket pocket, and then, with a thrill of suicidal exultation, he slapped his credit card, not his business card, on the glass beside the ear-

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rings. She plucked it up, stepped away, and ran the card through a machine. He signed the receipt quickly to disguise the tremor in his hand.

When he arrived at Inger's apartment house, his heart was beating powerfully. He felt liberated, exceedingly happy, and slightly sick. He planned to take Inger to a fine restaurant. He'd done so before. She'd seemed not the least impressed, but tonight, after dinner, he would give her the earrings. The quality of the light in the restaurant, the delicious food, the wine, the subtle ministrations of the staff – such things matter. The earrings would intensify the occasion. She would be impressed, even if she didn't think precisely like a whore. Besides, it would matter to Beard.

A woman in a short skirt opened the door. She was older than Inger, and had cold violet eyes. Her black hair was cut level with her ears and across into severe, straight bangs, emphasizing her hard thin-lipped expression. She'd looked somehow damaged and petrified by her beauty. Beard introduced himself. The woman said she was Greta Matti, Inger's roommate, then said, "Inger is gone."

"Impossible."

"It is possible," said Greta, her lips briefly, unpleasantly curled. Beard understood that Greta disliked being contradicted, but he didn't believe her. The woman was malicious.

"She took her monkey," she said. "Please go look for yourself, Mister Beard. No clothes in her closet, no suitcase, no bicycle."

Greta turned back into the apartment. Beard entered behind her and looked where she gestured toward a room, and then followed her into it. Closets and drawers were empty. There was nothing, no sign of human presence. Stunned by the emptiness, Beard felt he himself had been emptied.

"You never know a person," said Greta. "She seemed so shy and studious, but she must have done something criminal. I was an idiot to let her move in, a girl with a monkey. Half the time it was I who fed the beast. The telephone never stopped ringing."

Beard followed Greta to the kitchen. A tea pot had been set on a small table with a cup and saucer.

"Where did she go?" he said. He didn't expect a positive, useful answer. Who would disappear like that and leave an address. But what else could he say?

"You are not the first to ask. I don't know where she comes from or where she went. Would you like a cup of tea?"

Greta sat at the table and turned slightly toward Beard. She crossed her legs. It was clear that she didn't plan to stand up again to get another cup and saucer, and she seemed merely to assume Beard would stay. Her

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legs, he couldn't not notice, were long, naked, and strikingly attractive in high heels. He glanced at the white flesh of her inner thigh and felt humbled and uncomfortable.

Greta poured tea for herself without waiting for his answer, and took a sip. Did she think her legs gave him enough? He wanted to ask questions, perhaps learn something about Inger. He knew hardly anything about her.

"I'm sorry," said Greta, softening a little. "Her disappearance is very inconvenient for me. Perhaps it is worse for you."

Beard nodded. "Does Inger owe you money?"

"Technically, I owe her money. She paid a month in advance. I can make another cup of tea."

Beard was inclined to say yes. He needed company, but the whiteness of Greta's legs had become unbearable; repulsively carnal. He couldn't not look at them.

"Thank you," he said. "I must go."

Beard found a phone directory in a bar, looked up the address of the museum, and then hailed a taxi. He'd remembered that Inger took classes in paper restoration. They were given in the evening. At the museum, an administrator told him that Inger had quit the program. Beard next went to the restaurants where they had gone together. He didn't expect to find her in any of them. To his painful disappointment, he didn't find her in any of them. He returned to the hotel. Inger's bicycle was no longer in the lobby where it had been propped against a wall for two days. Its absence made him feel the bleakness of the marble floor, the sterility of the potted plants beside the desk, the loneliness of hotel lobbies.

In his room, Beard unwrapped the earrings and set them under the lamp on the night-table. He studied the earrings with grim fascination, as if to penetrate their allure, the mystery of value. It came to him that, after creating the universe, God saw it was good. "So what is good about it? Beard asked himself. He smoked cigarette after cigarette, and felt tired and miserable, a condition long associated with thought.

The earrings, shining on the nighttable, told him nothing. They looked worthless. But it was value – the value of anything aside from life itself – that Beard thought about. As for life itself, he assumed its value was unquestionable because he hadn't ever wanted to kill himself. Not even this minute when he felt so bad. Before he went to sleep, Beard read a train schedule and set the alarm on his travel-clock.

At noon he checked out of his hotel, wearing his new jacket, and went to a restaurant where he ordered a grand lunch. He refused to suffer. He ate the lunch assiduously, though without pleasure, and then he took a taxi to the train station. The ticket he bought was first class, an-

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other luxurious expense but he wanted – angrily – to pamper himself, or, as Inger would say, to be "self-indulgent."

As the train pulled out of the station, Beard slid the compartment door shut and settled beside the window with a collection of colorful, expensive magazine that he'd bought in the station. The magazines were full of advertisements for expensive things. Almost every page flared with brilliant color and they crackled sensuously. They smelled good, too. He stared at pictures of nearly naked models, and tried to feel desire. Exactly for what he couldn't say. It wasn't their bodies. Maybe it was for the future, more experience, more life. Then he reached into his jacket pocket to get his cigarettes and the earrings, intending to look at them again and resume his engagement with deep thought. He felt his cigarettes, but the earrings weren't in his pocket. Nor were they in any other pocket.

Beard knew instantly that he needn't bother to search his pockets, which he did repeatedly, because he remembered putting the earrings on the nighttable and he had no memory of picking them up. Because he hadn't picked them up. He knew. He knew.

As the train left the city and gained speed, he quit searching his pockets. Oh God, why had he bought the earrings? How could he have been so stupid? In an instant of emotional lunacy, he'd slapped his credit card down in the jewelry store and undone himself. The earrings were a curse, in some way even responsible for Inger's disappearance. He had to get hold of himself, think realistically, practically. He had to figure out what to do about retrieving them.

It was urgent to communicate with the hotel. Perhaps he could send a telegram from the train, or from the next station. He would find a conductor. But really, as he thought further about it, he decided it wasn't urgent to communicate with the hotel. It was a good hotel. This was Germany, not America. Nobody would steal his earrings. They would soon follow him to his destination, another good hotel. They weren't gone forever. He had nothing to worry about. This effort to reassure himself brought him almost to tears. He wanted desperately to retrieve the earrings. He stood up and went to the door. About to slide it open and look for a conductor, he heard a knock. He slid the door open with a delirious expectation. The conductor would be there, grinning, the earrings held forth in his open hand. Beard stared into the face of Inger.

She said, "I'm so sorry. I must have the wrong . . ." and then she let go of her suitcase, and said, "Gott behüte!" The suitcase hit the floor with a thud and bumped the side of her leg.

Beard said, "Inger," and he didn't think so much as feel, with an odd little sense of gratification, that she wasn't very pretty. There was a timeless, silent moment in which they stared at each other and his feelings

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collected. It gave Beard time to see Inger exactly as she was, a slender, pale girl with pensive grey eyes whose posture was exceptionally straight. She made an impression of neatness, correctness, and youth. In this access of plain reality, he felt no anger and no concern for the earrings. As he could now see, they would look absurd on the colorless Inger. He felt only that his heart was breaking, and there was nothing he could do about it.

With a slow, uncertain smile, Inger said, "How are you?"

Beard picked up her suitcase. "You always travel first class?"

"Not always."

"It depends on the gentleman who answers the door."

"I'm very pretty," she said, her tone sweet and tentative, and faintly self-mocking.

"Also lucky."

"I don't think so."

"I'm sure of it."

He put her suitcase onto the seat strewn with magazines. Then he took her hand, drew her toward him, and slid the door shut behind her. She said, "Please. Do give me a moment," but she didn't resist when he pressed her to the floor, his knee between her thighs. Her grey eyes were noncommital and vast as the world. Beard raised up on his knees to undo his trousers and then he removed Inger's sandals. He kissed her feet and proceeded to lick her legs, and then he hooked the crotch of her underpants with an index finger and drew them to the side and he licked her until she seized his hair with her fists and pulled him up, needing him inside as much as he needed her. He whispered, "I love you," his mouth against her neck, and he shut his eyes in a trance of pleasure and thrust into her, in her clothes, as the train pressed steadily into a mute and darkening countryside.

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EDITH KURZWEIL

Films at the Festival

In its opening salvo about the 1995 New York Film Festival the *Village Voice* referred to it as our new source of knowledge: "Back to work and back to school. This year's New York Film Festival offers a crash course in French race relations and Chinese politics, the new Albania and the Spanish Civil War, forgotten stars and revisionist movie history." Indeed, these were the major topics, deftly selected to balance multilingual and multicultural concerns, and to celebrate the skillful, innovative actors, producers, directors, photographers and countless experts who nowadays seem to be required to create stunning visual images accompanied by cacophonous sound effects. Early movies and their luminaries were featured in honor of the one hundredth anniversary of film. These mostly short black-and-white features, of course, not only highlighted the stupendous technical advances over the past hundred years, but applauded all those now working in the (glamorous) movie industry.

I saw about half of this year's selections, those that were presented on the days I was free to attend. All of these films astonished in their extensions of stark realism, exploring every gory facet of crime, and they displayed a number of obvious and remote symbols to depict the evils of capitalism and the dire consequences of war and of poverty. And every film exposing the inhuman brutality human beings are capable of noted that the producers had been careful not to be cruel to living animals. The most egregious example, I thought, was *Dead Presidents* by the twenty-four-year-old Hughes brothers – a saga about a black kid from the South Bronx who goes to Vietnam, comes back, and desperate for money finally concocts a ludicrous crime that is bound to end in disaster. At their press conference, the twin brothers stated that the ghastly, drawn-out and ear-splitting battle scenes – of a GI who carried with him the head of a Vietnamese he had severed as a keepsake; of another whose intestines were hanging out, and so on – had been shot in or near Disney Land.

Whereas this film is a clichéd version of the familiar anti-American variety verging on caricature, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* is a thoughtful documentary based on carefully selected film clips taken during the students' and workers' uprising in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989, narrated by participants on all sides of these events. Because the organizers of the festival refused to withdraw this film, Zhang Yimou, the director of *Shanghai Triad,* was advised by the Chinese government not to attend. His haunting film depicts a ruthless mafia-type overlord who not only holds in his grip the life of his stunning mistress but also that of the entire

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society. Although some reviewers have labeled *Shanghai Triad* an old-fashioned gangster film in Chinese garb, it widely surpasses that genre in subtlety and magnificent scenery.

French creations were represented three times. The producer of *Cyclo* – who states that he "wanted to show violence with great tenderness" – reveals the hopelessness of a Vietnamese bicycle driver, Cyclo, and of his older, beautiful sister, who inescapably are dragged into crime and prostitution. *Hate* is set in a typical housing project in an industrial suburb of Paris, where kids have nothing to do. Three sixteen-year-olds who are angry when, after their friend who has been beaten up by the police ends up at death's door, get into ever more serious scrapes and run-ins with the law – until one of them shoots a policeman. *The New York Times* called the third French (and Portuguese) selection, *The Convent,* "an exceedingly odd morality play, a whimsical blend of theological chess and erotic cat-and-mouse, larded with readings from Goethe's *Faust.*" Whereas the dreamy atmosphere of this outlandish concoction is desperately trying to emulate the films of such virtuosos as Truffaut and Resnais, this futile search for Satan is not only ludicrous but an utter bore.

Even if we were not told that *Kicking and Screaming* is an American romantic comedy, only in affluent America could four male college graduates so intently refuse to make plans for their future, while their formidable girlfriends are moving ahead full of confidence. The film, which is as bland and pointless as *Dead Presidents* is brutal and ideological, is equally naive. But then, this producer too is in his early twenties and has little understanding of history.

The British production of *Land and Freedom,* on the contrary, explains history by means of letters written from Spain by an Englishman during that country's civil war. It intelligently portrays the events that led a working-class man to join the Communist Party in order to help fight the Fascists and, gradually, to discover how he and his friends were being betrayed by the Stalinists. This moving account of youthful enthusiasm and disappointment, and of human love, is filmed with taste, despite the battle scenes. In *L'america,* two Italian entrepreneurs set out to make a fast buck by creating a bogus shoe factory in impoverished, backward Albania. But the pathetic, traumatized political prisoner they eventually choose to head this firm, and who hopes to get back to the Italy he grew up in so long ago, forces the brash, young Gino to pursue him through all of Albania, and to barely manage escaping onto a ship overcrowded with emigrants. *L'america* and *Land and Freedom* were almost alone among the festival's contemporary productions to reveal the humanity that may emerge under the most dismal conditions of political intrigue and betrayal. Moreover,

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they portray and hint at subtle ironies most of the other productions are lacking.

If we are to learn from these movies which according to the *Voice* have replaced books, what are we learning? That philosophy is hopeless? That a life of crime is inevitable? That money alone makes the world go 'round? What else are we to believe, to judge by the hype and hoopla, by the mega publicity and the applause by movie critics at the end of each performance?

Morris Dickstein has pointed out that 1930s moviegoers wanted to be entertained in order to escape from the Depression – either by laughing at slapstick comics, by reliving the individualist, macho idealization of the American Wild West, or by lapsing into spoken or sung romantic nostalgia. But it was fairly clear to them, I believe, that the subjects of these movies were purely escapist. The current crop, however, tends to draw the audience into the worst – and often exaggerated – phenomena in our culture, and to depict these as inescapable. And as filmmakers are teaching and sensitizing us to existing horrors with the aid of psychedelic effects, their box office take gets larger, as does the praise heaped upon them. To overdraw my point, killing, death, rape, and so on, accompanied by deafening crescendoes, pays off in money and prestige.

Many "conservative" educators have bemoaned this trend for some time and have argued that it contributes to the fact that fewer and fewer Johnnys can or like to read anymore. They have been attacked by their "liberal" colleagues who choose to use film rather than, or in addition to, books in their classrooms. "At least the students pay attention," or "I get them to comment and think about the issues" are these teachers' credible justifications. (The publishing industry gets on the bandwagon by promoting tie-ins.) Thereby, "conservatives" are undermining the movie industry, which has become a considerable component of our GNP, while "liberals" are boosting Hollywood by promoting its products. In this topsy-turvy world, the depiction of crime and war as entertainment is replacing textbooks; film studies are supplanting the study of history; and liberal credos and anti-Americanism ensure commercial success. In the process the country is going to hell on an express train.

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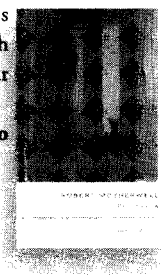

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BOOKS

Questioning the Mind

AN ANTHROPOLOGIST ON MARS. SEVEN PARADOXICAL TALES. By Oliver Sacks. Alfred A. Knopf. $24.00.

An Anthropologist on Mars consists of seven essays in which Professor Sacks describes his encounters with patients afflicted with a number of imperfectly understood neurological disorders, all of whom suffer from disabilities that put them beyond the empathetic range of the healthy, and who are, as Sacks puts it, "travelers to unimaginable lands." Earlier versions of all the essays have appeared in either *The New Yorker* or *The New York Review of Books* and they are clearly intended for the "intelligent general reader," who will, I suspect, often feel daunted and overwhelmed by Sack's use of medical and neurological terms.

The patients described include a painter who after a car crash lost all perception of color and now lives in a black and white world; a former acidhead and Hare Krishna, now in his fifties, who, after surgery for a neglected brain tumor, is still living in the 1950s; a surgeon with Tourette's Syndrome whose tics cease when he is operating or piloting his airplane; a man who had been blind for decades, had surgery in the hope of recovering his vision, but is now even blinder than before; a man who after a mysterious, undiagnosable febrile illness became haunted by images of his home town, which he had not seen for over twenty years, and since then has obsessively painted remarkably accurate pictures of it; and two autistic cases who have made a place and a name for themselves in the world. It was one of these who said of herself that she often felt like an anthropologist on Mars, incapable of understanding the complex emotions of those around her.

But these seven tales are emphatically not case histories written on the medical model. If they were, they would be shorter and much more discreet. Although some (but not all) of the subjects have been given pseudonyms, they are described in such vivid detail that they are readily identifiable – and presumably will be identified – especially since *An Anthropologist on Mars* did become the bestseller it was designed to be. The tales are also full of erudite digressions on the history of neurology and the present state of neurological inquiry, much of which will be above the heads of many readers. However, some of these digressions are fascinating, particularly those on memory and autism.

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Sacks questions the common assumption that memory is a permanent and accurate record or store, a sort of audio-visual tape of one's whole past, and instead quotes approvingly the British psychologist Frederic Bartlett, who in the 1930s argued that remembering is not the reproduction of fixed memory traces but an imaginative reconstruction which is hardly ever really exact. Sacks omits pointing out the relevance of this insight to the current debate about child and sexual abuse and the false memory syndrome.

Discussing autism, Sacks seems to endorse the idea that the central defect of autistic people is that they "have no true concept, or feeling for, other minds, or even their own," but goes on to say that this is only one hypothesis among many and that, as yet, no one theory encompasses the whole range of phenomena to be seen in autism. It seems to me that in view of such skepticism, Sacks is more confident than he should be that autism is a genetic, neurological illness and not psychogenic, and indeed that all cases now diagnosed autistic do in fact suffer from the same disorder. Sacks is, I think, himself infected by something of which he is also skeptical, something that might be called neurological imperialism, the drive to explain everyone and everything in terms of cerebral function – rather similar to the drive that led Freud to try to explain everything, including creativity, psychoanalytically. Sacks quotes, without disapproval or agreement, a neurologist who wonders whether Bartok and Wittgenstein were autistic, and mentions that "many autistic people now like to think of Einstein as one of themselves."

The main reason why *An Anthropologist on Mars* is not just a collection of case histories is that Sacks himself is a central character in the tales he tells: larger than life, inexhaustible, enthusiastic, exuberant, loquacious, gifted with total recall, eager to share his insights. Some will enjoy being carried along by the flood he generates, but others, I suspect, will find him exhausting, will wish he had been more selective and economical, and may wonder whether they really needed, for instance to be informed that, as he feels the heat, Sacks always carries a Japanese fan, or that as a child he was allowed to sit in on his surgeon-mother's outpatient clinic.

An Anthropologist on Mars is in one important respect successful. It demonstrates convincingly that the neurologically damaged can sometimes achieve a mode of being-in-the-world that is both viable and admirable; and that the lands to which they travel are not absolutely unimaginable.

CHARLES RYCROFT

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Pluralism and Humanism

WORDS AND LIFE. By Hilary Putnam. Edited by James Conant. Harvard University Press. $47.50.
PRAGMATISM: AN OPEN QUESTION. By Hilary Putnam. Blackwell Press. $16.95.

Hilary Putnam's many essays cover a fairly wide range of subjects including logic, the history of philosophy, science and scientism, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind. Of these the philosophy of language, in the form of a theory of reference, is probably the most important. It is central to Putnam's thinking and constitutes one of the starting points for his sustained criticisms of logical positivism, Tarskian theories of truth, Fodorian theories of reference, and the physicalism and utilitarianism of authors grouped (in *Reason, Truth and History*) under the delightfully catty label "the Guru of Sydney."

Putnam's readers will notice that *Words and Life* returns to familiar themes. There are, however, new slants and some new topics. For example, one essay discusses Newton's influence on English poetry while another, written with Ruth Anna Putnam, is about multiculturalism. Four essays are devoted to the inheritance of pragmatism. This subject is taken up again in *Pragmatism: An Open Question*, a slim volume containing three lectures given in Rome in 1992 ("The Permanence of William James," "Was Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?" and "Pragmatism and the Contemporary Debate"). Nowadays Putnam is weaving together insights from James and Dewey, Wittgenstein and Kant, and his own insights about truth and reference.

Putnam points out that certain Western philosophical theories – those which state that words get their meanings from mental pictures, or events in the brain, or homunculi in the head – have a parallel in the belief of other cultures in the magical powers of words. For example, in some communities in India and the Far East parents do not tell strangers the real names of their children; it is thought that knowledge of the "true name" makes possible a sinister control over the child itself. Putnam demonstrates that there are actually no magical necessary connections between pictures and things, words and things, images and things.

How then do words get meanings? Not from magical connections and not from causal connections either. According to Putnam in *Reason, Truth and History*," . . . signs do not intrinsically correspond to objects independently of how those signs are employed and by whom . . . 'Objects' do not exist independently of conceptual schemes. *We* cut up the world

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by **Roger Friedland**
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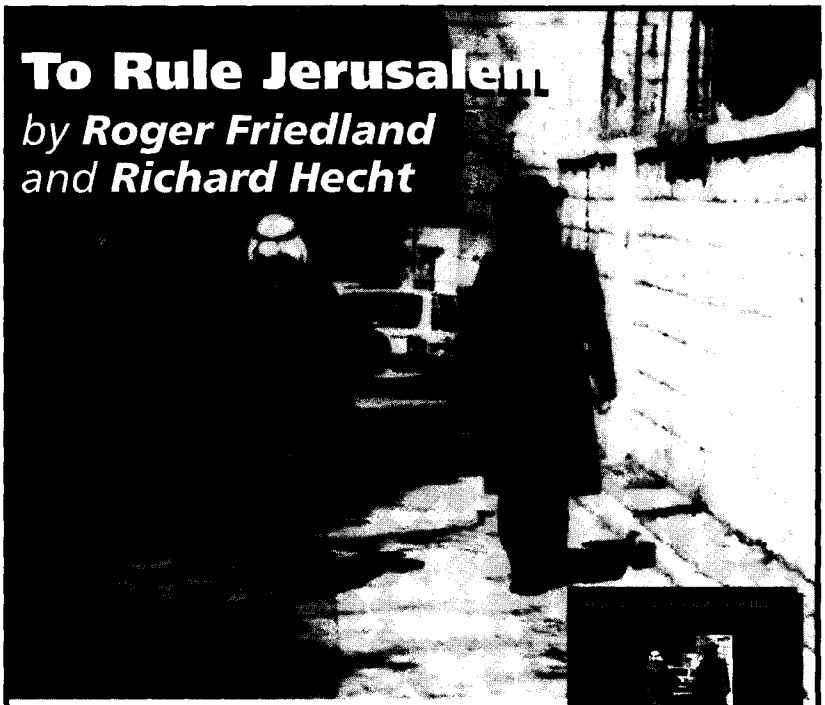

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into objects when we introduce one or another scheme of description." Yet in the same book he says, "There are language entry rules which take us from experiences of apples to utterances such as 'I see an apple', and language exit rules which take us from decisions expressed in linguistic form ('I am going to buy some apples') to actions other than speaking."

It looks on the face of things as if those entry and exit rules must depend on causal connections between apples (for instance) and words. Surely there couldn't be any such rules in an unstable, a-causal universe? Putnam's reply, I think, would be to draw attention to the fact that in this move we simply help ourselves to the word "cause" as if it denoted a primitive and unproblematic concept. But causation is not primitive, and it *is* problematic. Hume and Kant both understood that the cause-effect nexus is not a property of matter. It is a reality but not a physical reality.

Why can't a causal account tell us how words "hook into the world"? Firstly, the objects which cause the use of words are not always the objects to which the words refer. For instance, the cause of a student using the word "electron" is a professor or a textbook rather than any confrontation with electrons. Secondly, a causal account of reference ignores the fact that the idea of a cause entails the idea of relevance. Relevance is not a physical relationship, it is not a property of matter.

Putnam's argument starts from the premise that there is no such thing as a total cause. "Total cause" is an unusable notion. We pick out causes from a mass of background conditions, ignoring what is known already, and what has been taken for granted, and what strikes us, intuitively, as merely coincidental. Whatever is thus picked out is said to be *relevant*. But "Salience and relevance are attributes of thought and reasoning, not of nature." The viewpoint of naive materialism, that is, the view that causation *is* built into the fabric of the world, replaces philosophical reasoning with a naive reliance on the supposed teachings of physics – and an outdated (non-quantum) physics at that.

Putnam has a tendency to abandon his own earlier theories. He does not announce these changes operatically, as Wittgenstein did, but musingly (as it were). Thus he reports, in *Realism and Reason*, that he once held to a correspondence theory of truth, abandoning it reluctantly in 1976. On the other hand he is not tempted by deflationary accounts of truth: J. L. Austin's performative view (*to assert that p is true is to give one's personal backing to p*); Tarski's "disquotational" account; and the various redundancy theories of Frank Ramsey, C. J. F. Williams, and Dorothy Grover. Austin's theory of truth is so deflated as to be almost lifeless, and Putnam, as far as I know, never discusses it. His chief complaint about Tarski is that Tarskian sentences are not, strictly speaking, linguistic items.

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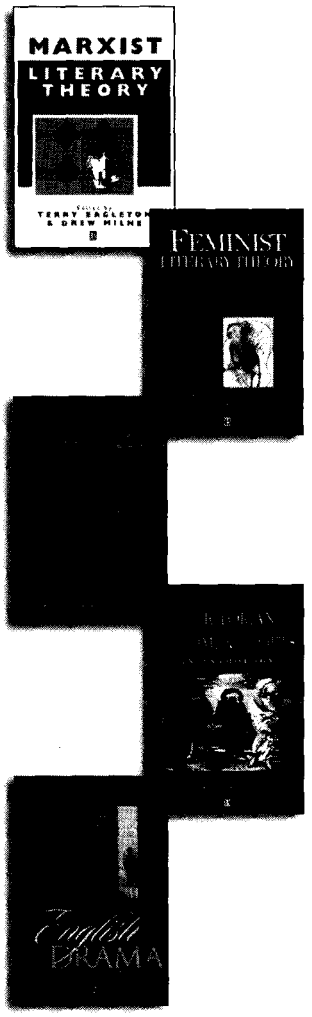

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They cannot be used to define truth because they have no place in any human language. I don't think Putnam has written about the "pro-sentential" version of redundancy theory elaborated by Grover, Bellnap and Camp in 1975. This version escapes anti-Tarski criticisms because pro-sentences would not be noises in the air or schemata written on paper but genuine semantic items. Putnam rejects Ramsey's account (which he strangely attributes to A. J. Ayer) on the grounds that it "finds its proper home" with the unexplained and mysterious idea of assertability conditions. This seems a poor argument; it reduces to an accusation of guilt by association.

In the 1970s Putnam launched a demolition raid on the mind-brain identity theory. He argued that empirical facts (such as the existence of animals with non-human brains) and logical possibilities (such as imaginary extra-terrestrial species) indicate that attempts to identify particular types of human brain states with particular types of sensations will necessarily fail. He advocated, instead, a computer model of the mind. Thoughts and sensations are not events taking place in the "hardware" of the brain but are similar to functions embodied in "software." However, in the essay "Why Functionalism Didn't Work" he demolishes this theory too, for it turns out to rest on the old postulation of magical causal connections between words and world.

Putnam has often attacked moral and cultural relativism. His main reasons are as follows: First, he gives an elegant proof that total or global relativism is self-refuting. Second, he shows that the supposed boundaries of moral, that is, non-total, relativism are arbitrary and unsustainable. Third, he argues that the popular belief that science has abolished value is false. Science cannot get started until would-be scientists come to see the value of truth, rationality, consistency, simplicity, and usefulness. Goodness is only "queer" (to use J. L. Mackie's word) if rationality, truth, consistency, and usefulness are also "queer."

A hostile response to moral skepticism appears again in Putnam's current thinking on James and Dewey, Kant and Wittgenstein. Kant was the first philosopher to realize that describing the world is not the same thing as copying it. Whenever human beings describe things the descriptions are shaped by human conceptual schemes. We schematize the world in different ways because we have many different purposes: scientific language reflects one kind of purpose, technical descriptions another, and moral, social, aesthetic, legal, and political judgments yet others. Putnam believes that Kant and the early pragmatists share the idea that practice has primacy over theory. He notes, too, that Kant influenced Schopenhauer, who influenced the young Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's view of philosophy, he argues, is a sort of deflationary version of Kant's.

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Kant, of course, provides "transcendental" explanations of human knowledge. His strategy with regard to moral knowledge and to metaphysics thereby eschews both induction and formal logic. Putnam, when in a transcendental or quasi-Kantian mood, speaks as follows:

> As beings who make judgments every day we are committed to a certain practice which carries with it the idea that value judgments are true (or false). Now, what must be the case for this practice to exist and for those judgments to be true?

He believes that Wittgenstein has an answer to this question about the transcendental grounds of moral judgment. The big message of all Wittgenstein's post-*Tractatus* work is that there are many language games, none of which should be given privileges over the others. The language of physics is specialized, aiming only at the prediction and control of *non-human* events. The rest of language is not like that. To insist that physical science gives the only correct picture of the world is to give scientific language an enormous unwarranted privilege, a privilege, moreover, which has no better foundation than a few little scraps of metaphysics. We need to remember that, according to Wittgenstein, metaphysics is empty and nonsensical while ordinary language is "all right." Putnam holds that those who engage in reductive philosophy, for instance, those who say that only science is truly "cognitive," are hankering after tidiness and completeness. (Some of them even look to Utopias in which everything is planned and only one language is spoken.) In other words, the thinkers who downgrade moral judgment and the human life-world do so because of a temperamental attachment to cultural monotony. Putnam himself, on the other hand, is a pluralist and a humanist.

I shall end this review with a small grumble. Although Putnam's work doesn't usually display any felt need to be fashionable, he seems in recent years to be giving way to pressures from editors and publishers suffering from the trendy disease of hyperscholism, or footnote-itis. *Words and Life* has four hundred eighty-three footnotes, plus a number of footnoted references not included in the credits. The book's introduction, by editor James Conant, has another ninety-five making its total footnotes five hundred seventy-eight plus some extras. Compare this to *ReasoN, Truth, and History*, which has a grand total of sixty-two footnotes. Admittedly *Words and Life* is a longer book, but it isn't nine-and-a-half times longer. Hyperscholism is an infantile disorder which affects adults. Its virulence is set to increase geometrically unless authors do something to stop it in its tracks. Probably at this moment some bug-eyed scholar with

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the brain of a twelve-year-old chess genius is sitting in his office in Miami or Toronto working on a formula to produce footnotes for footnotes for footnotes for footnotes. The good news is that several highbrow magazines, and even one or two learned journals, have either banned footnotes altogether or are demanding that they be kept to a minimum.

Jenny Teichman

Ending Welfare

WELFARE JUSTICE. RESTORING SOCIAL EQUALITY. By Neil Gilbert. Yale University Press. $25.00.

In the midst of the current, often bitter, mudslinging debate about welfare programs and policies, it is wonderfully useful to have Neil Gilbert's recent work *Welfare Justice* as a reference. Gilbert takes us behind the scenes of the debate and offers us history, data and careful analysis, wise counsel about policies that have outlived their usefulness and have been diverted from their original purposes, and new ideas and proposals that should be considered or adopted. For example, when Aid to Dependent Children was established in 1935, it was conceived and designed as a program for widows and their children, a "small group who, it was believed, would shortly disappear from the public assistance rolls through absorption into the social security system." By 1992, more than fifty years later, that program provided financial assistance to 4.3 million single-parent families at the cost of $20.3 million.

Gilbert takes on the "victim" movement and their advocates and espouses individual responsibility and the duty to be self-sufficient. He proposes a complete overhaul of the current system which is steeped in the concept of entitlements, and designs the framework for a system that focuses on the duties of citizenship and individual responsibility.

His chapter describing the bogus findings of advocacy researchers on such issues as the number of children kidnapped annually (advocate researchers claim 50,000, the more accurate figure is probably 550), the homeless (advocacy researchers report them to be in the millions, careful studies claim 250,000 to 300,000) and rape victims (the one in four number publicized by advocacy researchers such as Mary Koss as opposed to the 0.7 per 1,000 persons over twelve years of age reported by the Bureau

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of Justice Statistics.) Gilbert reminds us that much of the advocacy research on gender issues and violence demonizes men, portrays them as dangerous predators and defines women as helpless victims. He urges journalists to learn about the limits of social research in order to protect their readers against misleading data and wasteful policies.

Gilbert takes us back in time to the New Deal era and provides his readers with trend data and descriptions of policies that have fostered inequities and long-term dependencies on the American welfare system. He challenges us to create a system of social protection that enables private responsibility while maintaining a reliable framework of public care for those unable to help themselves. Gilbert understands the need to create a safety net to protect those who are unable to meet their own basic needs because of disabilities, financial hardships, and incompetence. Yet he points out that while the welfare policies of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway seek to eliminate all class distinctions, in the United States there is still a sharp division between the class of welfare recipients and other citizens and an emphasis on private schemes. He is a strong supporter of an "enabling" (rather than a "welfare") state, the goals of which are work and individual empowerment. Under such a state the poor would be viewed as the prime agents of their own development rather than as passive clients of the welfare system. Individual responsibility must play a strong competitive role against the notions of social entitlements. For every policy that is advocated Gilbert would urge that it contain an element of consumer choice, an opportunity for the private delivery of social service subsidies oriented to strengthen families, opportunities to accumulate assets, and work incentives.

Instead of the strident debate currently being conducted in Congress and the media about orphanages, cutting off welfare to teenage mothers, and doing away with school lunches, Gilbert offers a clear statement about the goals of welfare, the recognition that there will always be some people who will need government assistance, and the insistence upon individual responsibility as opposed to indefinite entitlements.

Many of the pieces and ideas in this book have appeared elsewhere as op-eds, essays, and journal articles. Especially, in these times, it is extremely useful to have Neil Gilbert's criticisms and proposals about many aspects of the welfare system readily available in a single volume.

Rita J. Simon

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Hysteria in History

Approaching Hysteria. Disease and Its Interpretations. By Mark Micale. Princeton University Press. $29.95.

Mark Micale, who teaches history at Manchester University, is one of the modern masters of the study of hysteria. The author of a brilliant dissertation on Jean-Martin Charcot, Micale began in 1989 to publish a series of essays on the meanings attached to hysteria over the past century. His work addressed hysteria not just in the light of its "medical" definitions, but also how its meaning (or better, these meanings) came to constitute the image of hysteria and the hysteric in modern consciousness.

Micale divides this book into two sections: the medical meanings of hysteria (and their reception), and their cultural appropriation in the general culture of the West. Physicians have looked at hysteria from a wide range of contexts. Historians have superimposed their own interpretations on these definitions. Intellectual and psychoanalytically oriented historians have dealt with this "object" in complex ways, usually assuming its basic validity as a diagnostic criteria. Feminist historians, on the other hand, have believed hysteria a theoretical construct and have asserted how its various symptoms mimicked the role into which women were placed during the late nineteenth century. Feminists assumed that the original meaning of hysteria (taken from the Greek word for womb) implied that it had to be understood as a means by which to control women. Male hysteria, the discovery of Jean-Martin Charcot, was ignored or relativized. Yet Charcot himself came to be of major interest to modern historians. His weekly public presentations of hysterics were visited by *tout Paris*, including Marcel Proust. Sigmund Freud's tutelage under Charcot had been intended to enable the young Viennese neurologist to catch up on the most recent ideas concerning nervous ailments. But he returned to Vienna a disciple of Charcot's, at least to the extent that he began to focus more and more on hysteria. Espousing it to be both a male and female "problem," he managed to suppress the other lesson he learned at Charcot's clinic – that male Eastern-European Jews were the most at risk for hysteria, especially when they found themselves in the intellectual hothouse of Paris. This image fitted Freud completely, and surprisingly enough Freud's hysterics turned out to be mostly upper-middle-class Jewish women in Vienna. Not a single male Jewish hysteric haunts his published case studies.

Mark Micale traces the complexity of this tradition and its reading in the histories of hysteria. His evaluations are fair, and he seems to have ex-

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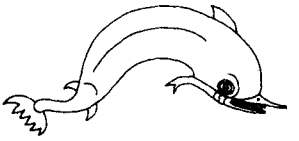

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amined every book, article, and footnote on hysteria published (and some unpublished) over the past half-century. His conclusions are insightful and critical. During the past fifty years the history of hysteria was formulated in what the Dadaists claimed in the 1920s was the age of hysteria, in different ways. (Maybe we could claim the same for the new *fin-de-siècle* with its repetition of many of the cultural manifestations of hysteria that would have been quite familiar to those a hundred years ago.) To be able to step back and attempt to grasp the complex nature of the hysteric from Charcot (with all of his antecedents) to the present (fourth edition) of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association*, is to approach many of the problems and contingencies of mental health and mental illness, of gender and culture, of body and mind present in Western society over the past century. Hysteria has been the intellectual litmus test for how contemporary medical categories – whether or not they reflected any underlying physical "reality" – must be understood in the light of their times. In the final chapter, Micale frames the meaning of medical-historical readings by showing how hysteria both shapes popular consciousness and how the popular understanding of mental illness frames hysteria. Medicine is shown to be part of the general system of cultural exchange.

This is not merely a solid and interesting volume, but it also asks central questions. And intellectuals are shown to be fascinated with hysteria and the hysteric. Historian Dominick LaCapra has suggested that there is a form of transference operative between the scholar-author and the object examined. If this is the case with the historiography of hysteria, it becomes clear that the wide range of meanings attributed to this illness/disease/syndrome/phenomenon/invention/label (depending on one's perspective) must be understood in terms of the historian's need to frame her/his identity. In this sense, Micale's undertaking must be understood in terms of a late twentieth-century rereading of the history of illness as one of the keys to human culture and civilization. It seems that our own "mental health" depends on localizing and identifying "mental illness." Micale has done this with great care. With considerable poise he has presented hysteria as an object worthy of study.

Sander L. Gilman

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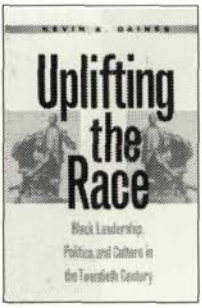

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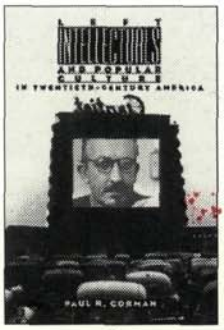

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